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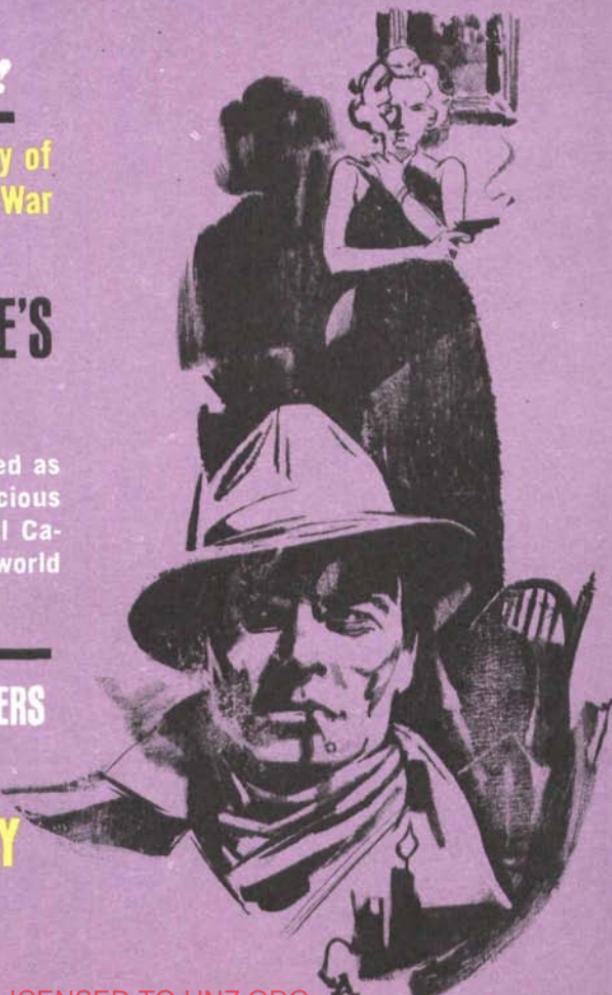
A thousand men were killed as
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MIKE SHAYNE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE



JANUARY, 1968

VOL. 22, NO. 2

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

THE TEDDY BEAR MURDERS

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Art turned to horror, a child's toy turned to murder, as Mike Shayne followed a danger-studded trail to track down the mad artist who had returned from the grave to paint his last, never-to-be-forgotten masterpiece—in blood!

2 to 51



NEW TRUE CRIME FEATURE

THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE
DAVID MAZROFF 52

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SIX NEW SHORT STORIES

THE ENEMY UNKNOWN JOSEPH PAYNE BRENNAN	80
THE BEST MOTIVE IN THE WORLD C. B. GILFORD	94
THE WILL TO LIVE ALEX JACKINSON	104
A MEMORY FOR THINGS LIKE THAT CLAYTON MATTHEWS	118
THE ENSEMBLE PLAYERS ESTELLE CHESSID	130
THE PRICE CARROLL MAYER	138

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RENT TO OWN
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THE TEDDY BEAR MURDERS



THE NEW, COMPLETE MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

Cornered, a mad killer waited to sell his life dearly, as Mike Shayne went out into the night for a final reckoning with an artist who had came back from the grave to paint his last masterpiece—in blood.

by Brett Halliday

MICHAEL SHAYNE stood back in the shadows of the doorway and cupped his cigarette to hide any glow. The street he watched was dark and deserted. The cars that passed hurried by without stopping. Few people walked the streets. No one at all had come down the business street in the last hour.

Shayne smoked and kept his eyes focused on the door of the building directly across the street. He was maintaining the fourth hour of his stakeout. It was a four-story brick building set in a row of similar buildings. Most of the buildings were dark at this hour.

The top three floors of the one Shayne watched were also dark.

The first floor was still lighted, and it was the street door into this floor that Shayne watched from his shadowed doorway. A small brass plaque on the door announced that the lighted floor was *The Logan Gallery*.

It was slow, tedious work, and few people entered the gallery after closing time. So far the few who had entered had not been the man Shayne was waiting for. Not that Shayne knew who he was waiting for, but when the right man arrived the signal would tell him. When the right man went into the gallery the shade on the window of Ramsey Logan's office to the left of the door would go down.

Each time someone approached

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the gallery Shayne came alert in his hidden doorway. Each time anyone actually entered the gallery he fixed his gaze on the lighted window and waited. So far nothing had happened. There was only another hour to go this night before the gallery would be locked up and the third day of Shayne's stakeout ended.

The redhead smoked and yawned. Three days of this was beginning to make him wonder if somehow there had been a leak, a tip-off? Only he did not see how there could have been. No, it was only a matter of waiting. Sooner or later the contact would be made, and—

The two shots shattered the silence of the night.

For a split second Mike Shayne held his breath and listened.

To his right, far up the street, he heard the sound of feet running away.

The redhead broke from his doorway and raced to the right up the dark street. No one else was in sight. No windows or doors opened. Shayne saw the figure on the sidewalk across the street, some hundred feet from the entrance to the gallery. He raced across the street, his eyes alert, his automatic in his hand.

Not a soul was in sight as the detective reached the prostrate man. The man lay on his back, legs and arms flung out at grotesque angles, eyes staring sightless up

into the dark Miami night. Shayne bent close over the man and saw that he was dead. Two shots at close range had shattered his head and he had died instantly.

Shayne looked around. A few feet from where the body lay there was another dark doorway. Inside this doorway the redhead found three cigarette butts of a strange make. He pocketed them and continued to study the doorway. He found nothing else, but on the sidewalk near the body he found two cartridge casings from a .32 caliber automatic.

The dead man wore a cheap suit, an ordinary white shirt and dark tie, a pair of black shoes badly run down at the heels, cheap black socks, and no hat. Shayne guessed the murdered man's age at about forty, average height and on the heavy side. He found nothing in the man's pockets except his wallet and ten dollars and forty cents in cash.

Papers in the wallet identified the man as Harold Truck, of Miami, and listed his occupation as waiter. There was nothing else, and Shayne was still alone on the street. Then he saw something in the gutter. The redhead bent and picked it up. It was a large, stuffed, brown teddy bear!

Shayne held the teddy bear for a full minute. The price tag was still on the stuffed toy animal. It was clean. From where it had been lying it seemed to have been

dropped from just about where the dead man was lying. Its condition showed that it had not been in the gutter long.

Shayne rubbed his gaunt jaw as he studied the strange teddy bear. Perhaps the toy had no connection to the dead man, on the other hand it had not been in the gutter long and it was exactly where it would have been if the man had been carrying it.

Still carrying the stuffed animal, Mike Shayne walked up the street to the gallery. He went inside to tell Ramsey Logan what had happened, and to call the police.

II

WILL GENTRY's large office was heavily shadowed. The only light was the desk lamp on the desk of Miami's Chief of Police. Gentry chewed slowly on his perennial black cigar.

"You figure he was the man you were waiting for?" Gentry asked.

"I know it now," Shayne said. "Logan identified him."

Gentry nodded. "I'm getting Logan's statement now. We've already checked him out. Nothing. Harold Truck, unemployed waiter, no record, no known association with any criminals. His wife doesn't have any idea why anyone would shoot him. She doesn't know of any enemies. She says he had acted kind of worried the last week, but doesn't know why."



"He had a reason to worry, didn't he?" Shayne said.

"It looks that way, Mike," Gentry agreed. "Okay, you tell me your story. What are you working on that brings Truck into it?"

Shayne lighted a cigarette. "You know I run a retainer with Continental Insurance up in New York? Well, three days ago, in the morning, I got a call from Continental. It seems about three years ago a painter named Roy Kalyan died in a fire in Tangier. He was young but pretty successful. He'd insured all the paintings he still

owned himself, with Continental. They were all destroyed in the fire, and Continental paid his widow."

"They identified the body?" Gentry asked.

"All open and shut, as far as Continental could see," Shayne said. "The wife wasn't even with him in Tangier. The company flew her over to be sure. Six other people identified Kalyan, including his brother and a Tangier police captain."

"How good was the ident?"

Shayne shrugged. "As good as a burning victim can ever be. I knew a case once in New York where a man made a mistake in identifying his own brother when there wasn't a mark on the body. In a fire case identification is always rough. Continental did a pretty good check, but they didn't turn up a thing. The Tangier police didn't have any unexplained missing persons."

"So they paid," Gentry said, "and forgot it?"

"They paid, but they didn't exactly forget. Then, three days ago, they got a call from Ramsey Logan here in Miami. He's an art gallery operator, a good one with a first-rate reputation, and he knew Kalyan personally. It seems a man, this Harold Truck, came to him with a color transparency of a painting he said he had and wanted to sell.

"Logan recognized it at once as

the work of Roy Kalyan. He was pretty excited about it—Kalyan's stuff has jumped in price since his death, of course. Logan thought he had a Kalyan no one had known existed. He checked his private catalogue, though, and that was when he discovered—"

"That it was one of the paintings that had been burned," Gentry finished.

"Right," Shayne said. "So he stalled Truck, told him to bring the real painting in a couple of days when he'd have the cash. Truck was selling it pretty cheap. Then Logan called Continental and told them. They called me, and I staked the place out, waiting for Truck. The rest you know."

"Who else did Logan tell about Truck and the painting?"

"No one, or so he says and I believe him. He admits that either of his two assistants could maybe have overheard him talking to Truck."

"We'll talk to them," Gentry said. "Any other ideas, Mike?"

"What about those cigarettes I found?"

Gentry picked up a paper. "Brazilian make. High class, sold in a few stores in Miami, but only a few. We're checking them out."

"And that teddy bear?"

Gentry shook his head. "A common brand, sold in a lot of toy stores. We're checking it out, too. But maybe it isn't even connected, Mike."

"Maybe," Shayne agreed, "but I've got a hunch he was carrying it. They didn't find any painting anywhere in the area, right? He was supposed to be bringing a painting to Logan. From what Logan tells me he was pretty nervous. It figures he'd have the painting hidden."

"In the teddy bear? That would have to be small, and, anyway, the teddy bear hadn't been touched. The lab is working on it now," Chief Gentry said, "but I don't expect much from it."

Shayne rubbed at his ear. "Did Truck have any kids?"

"No," Gentry said. "All right, it's nutty for a guy like Truck to be carrying a teddy bear—if he was. There's still nothing to prove he had it."

"There's less to prove somebody would just drop a teddy bear and leave it, Will," Shayne said. "It still had the price tag on it, so it wasn't just dropped by some kid. Maybe it could have popped out of a car, but there was little traffic tonight, and most people would stop to pick up their kid's teddy bear."

"Not if they didn't even notice it drop out," Gentry said. The Chief put his hands behind his head and leaned back in his chair to stare up at the ceiling. "Mike, if we find anything on that bear, or inside that bear, we'll go on from there. Until we do, I've got to figure it doesn't tie in with Truck,

and dig into the man's background for his killer."

Shayne nodded. "If I were in your shoes I'd have to play it the same, Will, but—"

The intercom on Gentry's desk buzzed. A voice announced Ramsey Logan. Moments later the art dealer entered. Logan nodded to Shayne.

"Mr. Shayne," Logan said, and then to Gentry. "I told your men all I could, Chief Gentry. It isn't much, I'm afraid. I only saw this Truck man once before, when he came to show me the transparency. I suppose someone found out I had reported the fraud to the insurance company."

"Perhaps," Gentry said. "Sit down, Mr. Logan."

Logan sat. The art dealer was a stocky man of about 45, with close-cropped blonde hair, and an easy smile that tended to hide shrewd blue eyes. Now the dealer puffed rapidly on a cigarette.

"You want to know who could have known about Truck and that painting, Chief?" Logan said. "Well, as I told Shayne, the answer as far as I'm concerned is no one. I didn't tell a soul. No one. Not either of my associates, and I'm not married, so I didn't tell my wife."

Gentry chewed on his cigar. "Where were you when Truck was shot, Mr. Logan?"

"Me?" Logan cried, then suddenly nodded. "Of course. That

painting would be worth money. But I could have had it, you know, with no one the wiser. I didn't have to call in the insurance company. Besides, I was in my office waiting for Truck. There's only one way out of the gallery, and Shayne was watching that door."

Gentry looked at Shayne. The big redhead nodded. He had never let his eyes leave the gallery door, or its two windows, and Logan had not come out.

"No one came out, Will, except one visitor who went the other way an hour earlier," Shayne said. "It looks like our killer is someone at the other end of the deal."

"But why?" Logan said, stared at both men. "I mean, Truck was selling the canvas to me. I never did think he was the real seller, but why would anyone want to stop the sale?"

"There's always a hijack possibility," Shayne pointed out.

Logan nodded. "Yes, I suppose so. Still, that painting is hardly valuable enough to kill for, Mr. Shayne. Especially with the cloud of fraud hanging over it."

Gentry agreed. "Logan's got a point, Mike."

"I know," Shayne said. "There's too much we don't know about the whole affair. For instance, why did Truck, or whoever hired him, pick Logan to try to sell to? I mean, Logan is almost an expert on Kalyan, a personal friend. He couldn't possibly have missed that

the painting was Kalyan's work, and was just about sure to spot the specific painting and know it was supposed to have been burned."

"Asking for trouble," Gentry agreed.

"I never thought of that," Logan exclaimed. "It doesn't make sense, does it?"

"Everything makes sense somewhere, Logan, once you know how to look at it," the redhead said grimly.

"Well," Gentry said, "I've got Truck to look at. What are you going to do, Mike?"

"Sleep on it," Shayne said and stood up. "Coming, Logan?"

The two men left Chief Gentry studying the file on Harold Truck with a frown on his heavy face. Downstairs, Logan paused with Shayne on the night sidewalk.

"It really doesn't seem to make much sense, does it, Shayne?" Logan said. "I mean, Truck getting killed like that."

"No, it doesn't," Shayne said. "Which means that there's a lot we don't know behind this. Tomorrow I'll want to talk to your two associates."

"They'll be at the gallery," Logan said.

"Fine. I'll be in."

Shayne got into his car and drove home to his apartment-hotel. He was thinking about a teddy bear carried by a murdered man, and about why what had looked like simple fraud had become murder.

III

MIKE SHAYNE arrived at *The Logan Gallery* at ten o'clock the next morning. Ramsey Logan was not in yet, but the two associates were. Dennis Wills, Logan's junior partner in the gallery, greeted Shayne at the door.

"Hello, Mr. Shayne, I heard about last night. It's all very confusing."

"Then you knew what was going on?" Shayne snapped as he walked into Logan's office with the partner behind him.

"What?" Wills said. "Why, no, not exactly. I mean—"

Shayne sat behind Logan's desk and smiled a wolfish smile at Wills. The junior partner was a man of fifty with thinning grey hair and a perpetual stoop. Wills had been an art appraiser all his life. The stoop came from thirty years of bending too closely over bad paintings. Wills stopped, took a deep breath, and sat down in a straight chair.

"I knew that Mr. Logan had contacted Continental Insurance about some kind of fraud, but not specifically what it was," Wills explained. "This is a small office, you know."

"I know," Shayne said, "and if you knew anything you probably knew it all. Are you an expert on Roy Kalyan, too?"

"I suppose I am. We all are here. You see we all knew Roy quite well in the old days. Alice



was even hoping to marry him before Jan got him."

The woman's voice cut in. "You are an old woman, aren't you, Dennis? To say nothing of a damned liar!!"

Shayne let his grey eyes stray idly to where the woman stood in the doorway of Logan's office. Alice Hope was an angular woman of thirty-five or so, too tall and too thin but with a pretty enough face. She was Logan's private assistant, and an expert on modern American painters.

"Is he a liar, Miss Hope?" Shayne asked.

"Yes. I never gave a damn about Roy Kalyan. He was a fine painter, perhaps even great in a way, but he was too unstable. An egomaniac, and that's poison for any woman."

"You knew what's been going on here, of course," Shayne said.

The woman bridled. "I did not! Mr. Logan did not see fit to inform me."

Dennis Wills leered. "Now who's lying? Of course she knew, Shayne. I saw her listening in when Ramsey

called Continental. We were all curious about that Truck."

"Oh, what a liar!" Alice Hope cried.

Wills ignored her. "We saw Truck arrive and go into Ramsey's office. Then Ramsey came out all excited. He got his file on Roy Kalyan. Naturally that interested both of us very much. Then we could see that something was wrong. So after Truck left I listened at the wall of my office. I couldn't hear it all, so I went out to try the switchboard and that was when I saw dear Alice listening on the extension."

"You dirty—" Alice Hope charged Wills with her fingernails clawing.

Wills squawked and ducked behind the desk. Shayne watched them stand and glare at each other. For a full minute they did nothing but face each other in anger. Finally Shayne spoke up.

"It looks like you're both lying all over the countryside," the redhead observed. "I can't tell what are lies and what is the truth. One thing I'm sure of, you both knew enough of what was going on to know that Truck had something valuable or dangerous or both. The question is, did you do anything about it?"

Both of them seemed to instantly forget their fight with each other and turn on Shayne. It was a matter of degree. They now had a common enemy in Mike Shayne.

"Do anything?!" Wills cried.

"Don't be ridiculous!" Alice Hope snarled.

Shayne continued to smile, but his grey eyes were hard and unsmiling. "Where were you both last night?"

"At home!" Wills said instantly.

"Alone?"

"Of course I was alone! I—" Wills stopped. "I see, yes, I have no alibi. I'm a widower, you see. I have a cook, but she leaves before eight o'clock."

Alice Hope laughed. "Some alibi. Not that mine is any better. How did I know that man was going to get murdered?"

"What is your alibi?" Shayne snapped.

"None. I was out all evening—alone. I can prove where I ate, but that only takes me up to about nine o'clock. I can't prove where else I was, and I'm not going to try."

"You don't want to say where you were?" Shayne said.

"I don't want to say," Alice Hope said. "You'll have to find that out and prove it."

Wills snickered. "She was probably spying on Logan."

"You!—!" The woman whirled on Wills.

Wills moved closer to Shayne with his small and crafty eyes glittering with malice. Shayne studied the angry woman. Wills' shot seemed to have hit home. And if she had been watching Logan, she

had been in or near the gallery where she was not supposed to be. It would stand looking into.

"What kind of cigarette do you smoke, Miss Hope?" Shayne asked.

"I don't smoke," the woman said.

Shayne looked at Wills. "You?"

"I smoke a pipe."

Shayne nodded, and stood up. "Okay. I guess that's all. The police will be around, probably. I guess you both better not take any trips."

They didn't say anything, and Shayne started for the door. Both of them began to follow him out. Suddenly Mike Shayne turned and snapped. "I forgot. Which one of you ordered the teddy bear delivered here?"

Wills only blinked. "Teddy bear? Why on earth—"

"I didn't expect any teddy bear!" Alice Hope cried.

Shayne brushed it off. "Just a thought. Forget it."

He strode from the office. His grey eyes were narrowed. He had a hunch that Alice Hope knew something about that teddy bear! He was going to have to check her story, but he thought he would let her stew for a time.

Outside he climbed back into his car and looked up the address of the late Harold Truck. It was in a cheap section of Miami. Shayne drove off with the definite impression that he was being watched from the windows of the gallery.

He found the address of Harold Truck. It was a shabby old apartment house in a rundown section. Truck's name was on the mailbox, and showed that his apartment was 3B. Shayne pressed the buzzer. It was answered after his third ring.

Shayne climbed the dirty stairs. A woman stood in the doorway of apartment 3B. She was a small, grey woman with thin hands that fluttered to her limp grey hair.

"Mrs. Truck?" Shayne asked.

"Cop? Another cop?" the woman said. "Did you find him? You found the animal what killed Harold?"

"Not yet, ma'am, but we will," Shayne said.

The woman stared at him, shrugged, turned away. "I'll believe that when I see it."

She went inside the room and Shayne followed. She did not seem to notice if he followed or not. He closed the door. She did not even turn around.

"Who are we, mister? Who was Harold Truck. Who cares who killed Harold Truck? File it and forget it. That was Harold Truck and that's me, and that's his killing! File it and forget it. Who cares?"

"I care, Mrs. Truck," Shayne said. "I care about any man who gets killed."

She turned, a cold smile on her worn face. "A cop what cares about a nobody? Don't make me laugh."

"I'm not exactly a cop," Shayne said. "I'm a private working for the insurance company."

"Insurance? Hell, maybe you will work. Money, yeah. That talks."

She sat down suddenly as if her legs had just given away. Shayne sat and faced her. There was a certain small hope in her flat eyes.

"Tell me about Harold," Shayne said. "Everything you can remember."

She shrugged. "I already told the cops. It don't take long. Everything about Harold Truck don't take five minutes to tell."

"Give me the full five," Shayne said.

Tears stood out in her eyes. "He was a good guy. A bum, but a good man. Maybe he didn't make much money, or give me much, but he tried. He wasn't smart, you know? He was dumb, my Harold, but that ain't no reason to kill a man."

She looked at Shayne as if asking if he agreed that being dumb was no reason for a man to get killed. Shayne said nothing.

Mrs. Truck nodded. "Dumb. No education, no talent, no nothin'. Fifteen years we been married. He never held a job no longer'n two years. He wasn't even a good waiter, but at least we lived on that, only Harold always wanted to be more than a waiter. Well, he's more now. He's got all the cops in Miami worrying about him."

"What was he doing recently?" Shayne asked gently.

The bitter woman snorted. "Lately he was in between. His usual spot—in between bad jobs while he schemed for a good job. He'd been out of work a couple of months. We were in the bag, you know?"

"What was he scheming on?"

"He was dickering for a gas station," the woman said. "He had a deal, he said, where a guy with dough was to buy the station and he was to run it on a sixty-forty percent basis. The forty was for us, of course."

"Did you believe his deal?"

"No."

"You said he was worried the last week," Shayne said.

"Yeh, that's what I said."

"Do you know what about?"

"No."

"But you don't believe there was a gas station deal, at least not the way he said? You think he needed some money to make that deal?"

She nodded, tears again in her eyes. "Yeah, that's what I think. I think the poor stupid slob tried to get some money to put up for that gas station."

"Where did he work last?"

"The Red Crab," she said. "That's a medium-priced restaurant downtown."

"I know where it is," Shayne said. "The last couple of weeks, where did he go? Who was the guy with the gas station deal?"

"I don't know who the guy was, but I know where Harold went. He was at The Red Crab almost two years and he liked the neighborhood. Every day he went out trying. Trying for any scheme, any angle, any job a couple cuts above waiter. And every day he stopped in The Parrot, a bar near The Red Crab, and at the Morgan Athletic Club for a workout and a steam bath."

"Do you know any of his friends there?"

"No," she said. "I don't know any of Harold's friends except a couple old pals we've known maybe ten years or more. He didn't have friends. Just me."

The tears stood out again, flowed now as she thought of her poor dumb Harold dead on a Miami street for no reason she knew.

"For me," she said, "you know. Whatever he did was for me."

Shayne let her cry for a time. Any friends she knew to tell about Gentry and his men would check out. Besides, he had a feeling that whatever had killed Harold Truck had been something casual, something he had stepped into and that had worried him the last week.

"Mrs. Truck, think hard. Can you think of anything your husband might have done that would have involved a teddy bear?"

She blinked. "A teddy bear?"

"A stuffed toy bear," Shayne said. "Did he have any reason to buy one? Anyone he was going to



give such a doll to? A—woman, maybe?"

"A woman? Harold?" She laughed. "No, not a woman."

"Did you ever see him with a teddy bear? Or hear him talk about one?"

"No, never. Why would he have a teddy bear? We never had any kids, you know."

Once more Mrs. Truck stared at nothing and began to cry. Shayne watched her a moment, but there was nothing he could do. He stood up, touched her shoulder, and left. She was still there in the chair, crying, when he closed the door behind him.

IV

THE PARROT was a small, narrow tavern two blocks from The Red Crab Restaurant in the heart of downtown Miami but just off the main business streets on a street of hotels. When Mike Shayne went in it was nearly eleven o'clock and the bar had only two customers. One

was a distinguished looking old man who did not even look up from his morning whisky sour, and the other was a young woman who stared at Shayne.

"Beer," Shayne said to the barman. It was too early for anything else.

The barman drew the beer and slid it onto a coaster. Shayne paid.

"Did you know Harold Truck?" Shayne asked.

The barman paused in his turn away. "Cop?"

"Insurance company," Shayne said.

"So? The cops were in," the barman said. He was a tall, well-spoken man. "I told them all I know, Mr—"

"Shayne," the redhead said. "What did you tell them?"

"That I knew Truck. He was a regular the last couple of years. That I liked him. That he never caused any trouble or was in any trouble that I know. I didn't know any of his friends. The last couple of months he drank with a small guy at a table maybe a couple of times a week. I think the small guy was in some kind of gas station deal with Truck. That's it."

"You know the name of the small man?"

"No, but he comes in a lot. I expect he'll be back, unless—"

"Unless?"

The barman spread his hands. "Unless he killed Harold."

Shayne nodded thoughtfully. He

couldn't think of anything in a gas station deal that would lead to murder, especially since it sounded like the other man was the money man.

"You didn't see Truck with any other men?"

"Here and there, sure, but I never paid any attention. As I said, Truck was a regular; he talked with almost anyone who came in. He was the friendly type."

"Was he in here last night, maybe?"

"Yes, he was," the barman said.

Shayne straightened up. "What time?"

"About nine, a little after."

Shayne made a rapid calculation. From here to The Logan Gallery, walking, would take about thirty-five minutes. Just about right if Truck had spent about fifteen minutes in the bar.

"How long was he here?"

"Ten, fifteen minutes. He said he just needed a quick one. He had two quick ones, straight rye, and left."

Shayne took a breath. "Was he carrying anything? A teddy bear, maybe?"

The barman nodded. "He was carrying a box. I don't know what was in it. About the right size and shape for a good-sized teddy bear, though."

"He had it when he came in?"

"That's right," the barman said.

"Do you know where he came from?"

"No, but he usually stopped at Morgan Athletic Club in a hotel up the block."

"Thanks," Shayne said, and dropped a dollar tip.

The barman nodded gravely. "Thank you, Mr. Shayne."

He went out and up the block to where a sign proclaimed The Morgan Athletic Club. He climbed stairs from the lobby to the second floor and went through a double door to the desk of the club. A tiny, muscular man looked up from a sports magazine.

"Yeah?" the man said.

"Don't I know you?" Shayne said. "Spider Morgan. You fought Saddler to a draw once."

The tiny man beamed at Shayne, glowing in the fact that he was remembered.

"Yeah," Morgan said, "and Sandy belted me out in three the second time around. I'd had the flu, only that wasn't no excuse. Saddler was the best featherweight ever lived. The truth was the first time he'd been sick and he didn't know my style."

"Sandy was the best," Shayne said, "but you were good. One of the real good ones."

The ex-featherweight nodded without self-consciousness. "I was good. Not the best, but good." And the little man looked at Mike Shayne. "Only you didn't come here to tell me you remembered me, even if I like it. You got the look of cop."

"Private," Shayne said. "For the insurance company."

"What's it about?"

"Harold Truck," Shayne said. "Was he in last night?"

"Yeah. Like I told the real cops. Came in about seven, was here till about nine."

"Did he talk to anyone in particular?"

"Everyone, like always. Truck was a regular. Did his workout and swim. Only—"

"Only?" Shayne prompted.

Morgan frowned, flexed his biceps thoughtfully. "I think he was nervous, you know? Real nervous. We did some sparring like always and his mind wasn't on it. He'd been kind of funny, all week. Only last night he was real jittery."

"Did he say anything?"

"Nothing special."

"Did he have a package? About two feet long, maybe a foot wide?"

Spider Morgan started to shake his head, and then suddenly stopped and snapped his fingers. "Hey, wait! Sure, that was something. He didn't have a package like that when he came in, no. Only he went out! I remember because I don't like 'em to go out after the workout and before the swim, see? Bad for the health; you got to cool down slow. I forgot all about that."

"He went out?"

"Right. After the workout he dressed quick and went out for maybe five minutes, maybe less."

When he came back he had this package. He took it out again when he left, about nine."

"Did he say anything about the package? Where he got it?"

Morgan shook his head. "Not to me. I think Joe, my pool man, talked to him."

"Can I talk to Joe?"

"Sure."

The tiny little muscleman walked to an inner door. The sound of splashing in vast space came from the door, and the humid odor of an indoor pool. Morgan called for Joe. A tall brown man appeared. Morgan brought him to Mike Shayne.

"This guy wants to know if Truck talked about that package he had, Joe," the little man said.

Joe grinned. "I asked him if maybe he got a bomb in it, and he said I'd never believe what he had in it. I told him for a buck I'd take three guesses. He told me go ahead, and he'd even tell me where he got it."

"Where?" Shayne said quickly.

"He said at a toy store. So I guessed a kid's game, and he said no. I said a teddy bear second, and he said I won the buck. We had a laugh. I told him to forget it."

"Did he say what toy store?"

"No, just a toy store."

Shayne thanked the two men and left. His grey eyes were narrowed but bright. A toy store! And Truck had picked up the teddy bear somewhere about two minutes

away from The Morgan Athletic Club. On the street Shayne began to walk north.

V

MIKE SHAYNE timed his walk on his watch. He walked fast, as he guessed Harold Truck would have, and gave himself a small margin to be sure.

There were no toy shops within a two-and-a-half minute radius north of the club.

He backtracked to the club and went south. He tested all side streets in all directions. Two minutes was a long time when a man walked, and a lot of ground could be covered. It was probable that Truck had walked nowhere near that length of time, but Shayne had to be sure.

An hour later he was back at the club. He had found three toy shops. Two of them were on the far edge of the area that might be covered inside two minutes. The third was within a block of The Morgan Athletic Club. The first two were possible but not probable. Shayne decided to concentrate on the probable, at least for today.

He drove back to his office. Lucy Hamilton looked up reprovingly as he came in.

"Everyone's been trying to get you, Michael," the brown-eyed secretary said.

"Who's everyone, Angel?" Shayne asked as he went to his

supply closet. He began to select a miniature camera.

"A Mr. Logan, wanting to know what he should do," Lucy said and then read off a list. "Continental Insurance, who want you to call back. There were a couple from two of your other cases, and Chief Gentry."

Shayne picked out the camera he wanted, and strode into his private office. "Get me Gentry, Angel," he said over his shoulder.

In the office he loaded the miniature camera. The phone buzzed. He picked it up.

"Yes, Will," Shayne said, "any news?"

"Nothing," the gruff voice of the Chief of Police replied. "We've checked out all of Truck's friends. They seem clean so far. The teddy bear is just a teddy bear. We're working on Logan and his associates now. Logan comes out pure. A good reputation, and he was in the gallery all night."

"Check close into the Hope woman," Shayne said. "She's hiding something. Find out where she ate, and where she went from there."

"We'll get it. Do you have anything, Mike?"

"I'm not sure yet. You're working on the gas station deal angle?"

"We are. Keep in touch."

Next Mike Shayne called Continental to report what had happened and to explain that he was continuing on the case. He called

Logan last. The gallery owner was eager.

"Have you found anything?" Logan asked.

"Not yet."

"What shall I do?"

"Sit there and see if anyone else contacts you. I doubt if anyone will." Shayne added, "You never can tell, though."

There was a pause. "Shayne, I'm not sure, but I think Wills is holding something out on me. He's acting very nervous."

"Watch him," Shayne said.

After he hung up he fixed the miniature camera in place under his coat so that it shot through the top button hole. The shutter control was in his pocket. He strode out again.

"Stall the other cases, Angel. I may be out all day," Shayne said to Lucy Hamilton as he passed.

He drove back to the toy shop within a block of The Morgan Athletic Club. He parked close to the entrance, stepped out, and entered the store.

Two other customers were in the shop. Shayne studied the intricate spy kits they made now for young boys, complete with every lethal weapon known to man that could be carried. Unobserved, he photographed the middle-aged, heavy-set woman behind the counter, and a short man of about fifty, who seemed to be the boss.

Then he bought a small stuffed dog and left. He had seen nothing

suspicious. Outside he sat in his car so that the camera was focused on the door. He photographed the two customers as they came out.

He remained on his stakeout until the shop closed at five o'clock, photographing everyone who went in or out. At five he drove off, but only some fifty feet up the block. Then he got out of his car and stationed himself not far from the shop, looking at his watch from time to time as if waiting for someone.

Between five and five-thirty two people knocked and were admitted to the store. One was a stout man who arrived in a car and carried a large case. The other was a stunning woman of about thirty with red hair and a model's figure. Mike Shayne photographed both of them.

At six o'clock the short man and the heavy-set woman locked up the store and left. Shayne returned to his car and drove to a small shop a block from his office.

"Mike, long time," the sandy-haired young man in the shop said to the detective.

"Hello, Wally," Shayne greeted. "Develop these rolls right away, will you?"

"Sure, Mike."

"Where's the phone?"

"On the counter there."

Shayne strode to the telephone while the young man went back into the dark room of the photo shop. Shayne called Logan and

told him he was bringing something for him to look at, and asked Logan to keep Alice Hope and Dennis Wills there until he got there.

Then he smoked and read a magazine until Wally came out of the dark room with his prints.

"I blew them up to three by three snapshot size," Wally said.

"Did they all come out?"

"All fine."

"Thanks, Wally," Shayne said and paid the youth.

In his car he drove to the quiet side street of The Logan Gallery. He walked into the office and dropped the picture onto Logan's desk. The gallery owner looked at him. Logan was alone.

"Where are the others?" Shayne asked.

"In their offices," Logan said. "Shall I send for them?"

"Not yet," Shayne said. "First take a look at those pictures and see if you recognize anyone."

Logan bent over the pictures, frowning and shaking his head as he turned each one. Shayne watched him pass the pictures of the man and woman who ran the toy shop with a twinge of disappointment. His best hunch had been on the two in the shop.

Logan turned the pictures one by one as Shayne's hunch grew thinner and thinner. Then Logan suddenly gasped, stared.

"Good God!" Logan cried.

"What?" Shayne snapped. "You recognize someone?"

"This woman!" Logan said, pointed at a picture.

Shayne looked at the picture. It was the dazzling redhead who had arrived at the shop after it had closed.

"Who is she?" Shayne asked.

"It's Jan," Logan said, stared at the photo. "Jan Lewis!"

"Who the devil is—" Shayne started.

Logan waved a hand. "No, no! Sorry, Jan Kalyan. She's Roy's wife. His widow, don't you understand!?"

Shayne grabbed the snapshot. "I understand," he said grimly. "That teddy bear did mean something. Truck was carrying the painting in the box. Probably a false bottom in the box. The killer grabbed the box and left the teddy bear."

"The box?" Logan said.

"Would it have fitted in a box about two feet long?"

Logan blinked. "Why, yes, I think so. Out of the frame, off the stretcher, and rolled it would be about two feet wide."

"Then that's it. The bereaved widow has the supposedly burned paintings stashed away and is selling them. Somehow she got wind of your calling Continental and knocked off Truck to keep him from delivering."

"Not Jan, no!" Logan insisted. "She wouldn't kill anyone."

"Would she try the fraud if she found her husband's paintings?"



Logan shrugged, nodded. "Yes, she might do that. Jan always liked money."

"Okay, so she tied up with some playmates who would kill. What I don't know is how she found out about Continental being tipped off. Do Wills and Miss Hope know her?"

"Yes, both of them. But not for three years. None of us have seen Jan since Roy's death. We thought she was still in Europe. But, Shayne, Jan would have known I'd recognize that painting."

"Maybe she didn't know you'd be honest," Shayne said.

The detective gathered up his pictures, pocketed the single pictures of Jan Kalyan and the two who operated the toy shop and dropped the rest in the wastebasket. Logan watched him.

"What are you going to do?" Logan asked.

"Find your Jan Kalyan and recover Continental's paintings. They

paid for them," Shayne said. "I want you to sit tight in case anyone still tries to get in touch with you about that sale. If anyone does, call Will Gentry."

Logan nodded. "Okay."

"As soon as I leave call Gentry anyway. Tell him I'm staking out The Purple Circus Toy Shop downtown. He'll know where it is. Tell him if he wants to send some help they better come quiet."

Before Logan could answer Shayne turned on his heel and left the office. In his car outside he made a squealing U-turn and headed for the toy shop.

VI

THE TOY shop was dark. Mike Shayne checked the alley at the rear. There was a rear door. He listened closely at the door and heard no sounds inside.

The third key on his special ring opened the back door. The redhead slipped inside and closed the door behind him. He waited until his eyes were accustomed to the dark. He saw that he was in a small stock room piled high with boxes.

His grey eyes glittering, Shayne checked the sales room of the shop, a small office, and the bathroom. No one was there. Quickly he returned to the rear stock room and began to inspect the boxes.

Most of the boxes were empty. Others contained toys waiting to be

sold or placed on the showroom shelves. In a rear section, separated from the other boxes he found a series of empty boxes. In the last two of these he found false bottoms.

He opened the false bottoms and saw two rolled canvases. Shayne grinned, and reached to pick out one of the paintings.

A key grated in the lock of the front door.

Swiftly, Shayne replaced the two false-bottom boxes on the shelf and slipped into a dark corner behind a row of boxes. The hurrying footsteps of a man came toward the store room. The lights went on. Shayne flattened against the wall, but the light was dim in the back room and he was still in shadow.

The short, fiftyish man who seemed to be the boss of the toy store hurried across the room without looking right or left. He went straight to the shelves and picked up the two false bottom boxes that contained the paintings. Then he turned and walked back out of the room. The lights went out.

Shayne waited. He had to make a fast decision. He had hoped to find the woman, Jan Kalyan, but the short man had taken the paintings. The police could not have arrived yet. He made his decision.

The outside door closed. Shayne left his corner and ran quickly through the front showroom and slid out the front door. The short man was walking fast, about ten

yards ahead to the right. Whatever the man was up to he was intent on it. The man did not look around, but headed straight for a small Ford sedan.

Shayne waited until the man tossed the two boxes into the back seat. Then the redhead sprinted for his own car.

The Ford drove straight with no indication that the short man had any idea he was being followed. Shayne had no trouble keeping the man in sight. Traffic was relatively light in the Miami twilight, and soon the Ford swung onto an expressway and headed south.

Shayne maintained his distance on the highway until the Ford went off in a new housing development section on the southern edge of Miami. Then he closed up a little in the winding roads of the tract. The Ford pulled to a stop in front of a small ranch style house set back some thirty feet from the road. Shayne drove on past and around a curve and pulled up.

The detective left the car and worked his way swiftly back to where he could watch the Ford and the small ranch style house. It was now dark, with only a heavy purple tinge of light remaining low to the west in the Florida sky. The front of the small tract house was dark, but there was light coming through a rear window.

Shayne moved among the trees and shrubs toward the rear window that showed light. He was at the

corner of the house when the woman screamed.

A high, shattering scream. It echoed through the night like the cry of some terrified animal.

Shayne was running toward the rear door near the lighted window before the echo of the scream had died. His feet pounded on the gravel. His automatic was out and in his big hand.

He hit the door and bounced. It was locked. Shayne backed off and raised his foot to kick.

Two shots exploded inside the house and tore through the door.

His foot up, Shayne flung himself sideways and down. The searing heat of a bullet brushed his cheek. He sprawled out on the gravel behind the house, a sharp pain in his shoulder where he had hit the ground.

A shadow appeared at a darkened window.

Shayne fired twice at the window and rolled frantically for the cover of three garbage cans.

Two more shots hammered the night. One kicked up dirt two inches from his thrashing foot. The other sang off a garbage can. Shayne's two shots shattered the rear window of the house.

Shayne lay behind the garbage cans, breathing hard. His grey eyes watched the house. Nothing moved now.

A car engine started.

Shayne leaped up and ran around the house. The small Ford

was just coming out of a U-turn over a neighbor's grass and was heading away fast. Shayne pumped two more shots at the fleeing car and then held his fire. A miss in this tract could kill some citizen once his shot was not straight down the road.

The car vanished into the night. Shayne turned and walked warily back into the house through the open front door. The living room was dark and silent. Too silent. It had that air of ominous pulsing that the redhead always sensed in a house where violence had just been done.

He went on through the dark living room into the lighted family room. The short man from the toy shop lay on the floor in a pool of blood.

A large bloody kitchen butcher knife, flung down ten feet from the body, showed where the blood had come from.

Shayne bent over the man. He was dead—three deep stabs in the stomach and chest by a strong man. Shayne gingerly looked through the short man's pockets. A wallet told him that the victim was Ralph Merganser, aged fifty-two, married, occupation: small businessman.

Shayne stood up and looked around the room. The two false bottom boxes were on a table. Shayne opened them and found the two paintings inside. The killer, surprised by Shayne, had left in

too much hurry to take the paintings.

He searched the other room and found nothing. His last stop was a small room, where a double bed had been slept in and not made. He looked at the bed for a time. Two people had slept in it, and there was lipstick on one pillow.

He looked around the bedroom. Female makeup and grooming tools occupied the top of one bureau. Shayne looked closely at them. The shades were for the coloring of a redhead, and the brush held strands of long red hair.

In the closet to the left of the bed he found mostly male clothes. He opened the closet to the right of the bed. Female clothes hung in profusion. On the floor there were a dozen pairs of shoes.

One pair of green shoes had feet in them.

Slim legs went up from the shoes and vanished behind the row of dresses.

Shayne leaped back and away from the open door. Half-crouched, his automatic ready, he watched the closet door.

"Okay, out and keep your hands in sight. Quick!"

For a moment the room seemed to hang in suspended silence. Then there was a rustle of clothes and a woman stepped out of the closet with her hands in front of her. The hands were shaking. The woman's

whole body seemed to be cringing. Her beautiful face was like whitewash.

"Stand out in the room," Shayne snapped.

She stood out in the room. She was the stunning redhead he had seen at the toy store. Jan Kalyan.

VII

MIKE SHAYNE watched the shaking woman. A small smear of blood stained her green dress. The dress fitted like a glove, and what Shayne couldn't see he could imagine. It was nice imagining.

"Is he—gone?" the woman, Jan Kalyan whispered. "Did you—" "He's gone, and I missed him. He killed Merganser?"

She nodded and a shudder quivered through her whole body.

"He went mad, insane. He—would have killed me, too. Anyone who knew."

"He killed Truck?" Shayne demanded.

"Who?" the woman said, vague.

"The man who was delivering the painting to Logan."

"Oh, yes, he killed him," she whispered. "Insane. He's gone mad. He's gone to kill—"

"Gone to kill who?" Shayne cried.

"Her, the woman. She knows."

Shayne waved his automatic. "Inside. Living room."

She marched ahead of him into the living room. He sat her in a

seat, and strode to the telephone. He dialed Gentry's number.

"Will? Get some men fast to The Purple Circus Toy Shop, and —what?"

"I've got men there," the Chief said. "We thought you were still there."

"I had to tail a guy. Okay, tell them to watch for a heavy-set woman. Grab her and hold her. Send some men to five twenty-two Dolphin Street," it was the address he had read on Ralph Merganser's driver's license, "and pick up the woman if she's there. I figure she's Mrs. Merganser. Someone's out to kill her and fast."

"Hold on," Gentry's voice growled.

Shayne bit his thumbnail as he waited. The beautiful redhead sat as if hypnotized, her fine body quivering faintly all over.

"Right. My men are ready," Gentry said as he came back. "Who's doing the killing?"

"Come out here and I'll tell you. I've got a corpse here," Shayne said. "It's De Leon Gardens tract four fifty-three Calle Real."

"I'm on my way," Gentry growled.

"Hold it, Will. Bring Logan."

"Right."

Gentry hung up. Shayne did the same and turned to face the woman again. Something had changed. Her body still shivered a little, but her face had changed. It had become wary, in hiding.

"You're Jan Kalyan," Shayne stated.

"I—yes, I'm Mrs. Roy Kalyan."

"Who is the man working the painting deal with you?" Shayne said.

"He—he's a man I met. I needed help. I didn't know how to sell the paintings."

Her hesitation was no longer simple nervousness and fear. She was making it up as she went along. Shayne watched her with his thin, wolfish smile.

"You met him," Shayne said, "and he did know how to sell the paintings? Then the Mergansers came in and they knew how to sell them, too?"

"Yes," she said. "He brought them in. I never knew them."

"You met him in Brazil?"

She jumped. "What?"

"He smoked Brazilian cigarettes."

She nodded. "Yes, I met him in Brazil. He was Brazilian. Jorge Pelan. He was fine. But he must have gone mad."

"Maybe," Shayne said.

Sirens had begun to wail in the distance and come rapidly nearer. Cars rolled into the street in front of the house with their sirens growling. Shayne went to the door, with one eye still on the woman. He watched the police pile out of their cars and the medical examiner's ambulance pull up.

Gentry came through the door.

"He showed up at her apart-

ment, but we missed him," the Chief growled. "They let him spot them."

"Did they see him?"

"Feet going away and no more," Gentry said angrily. "What have you got here?"

"Mrs. Kalyan and a corpse," Shayne said, and explained his actions in following Merganser to the ranch style house, and the action that had followed.

"If we'd been with you he'd have been taken," Gentry said.

"Sure, but I couldn't wait or I'd have lost Merganser."

Gentry nodded gloomily. "I guess so. Let's have a look."

While the Chief and the ME were examining the body, and two of Gentry's men had taken over guarding Jan Kalyan, Shayne went to the false bottom boxes and seemed to be studying them with a far away look in his grey eyes.

Ramsey Logan came in. The gallery owner went straight to Jan Kalyan. The woman seemed to not quite see him at first. Then she smiled.

"Hello, Ramsey. It's been a long time," she said.

"Are you all right, Jan?" Logan asked.

"I'm alive," Jan Kalyan said, shivered. "Oh, Ramsey, it was awful. He went berserk! He found out about his mistake, and he lost his mind!"

Shayne and Gentry were both standing over the woman now.

The ME's men were already removing the body of Ralph Merganser. Shayne smiled at the woman, but his grey eyes were not smiling.

"Go on, Mrs. Kalyan. Tell us about the mistake," Shayne said.

The woman blinked. "I don't know what it was. Just that he screamed about being stupid and that he had to get out from under."

"That's all?" Shayne said softly. "Then maybe I'll tell you the story."

Shayne lit a cigarette. The woman watched him now like a cornered animal. Logan looked uneasy. Gentry lit the stub of his black cigar and waited.

"Let's start with why your partner picked Logan to try to sell the paintings to," Shayne began. "I wondered about that from the start. It didn't make sense. Logan would be the first one who would recognize that painting as one of those supposed to have been burned with your husband.

"Logan is an honest dealer, so why all the cloak-and-dagger with Truck if Logan was sure to spot the painting? At first I thought Logan was playing some kind of game, but it's clear now that he isn't involved. So what was the reason. And what was your partner's mistake, Mrs. Kalyan?"

The woman had become sullen. "It's your story."

Shayne nodded. "So it is, Logan, I want you to look at something."



Shayne walked into the rear room where the body was gone now, and picked up the two boxes. He opened them and showed that they were empty—like a magician about to perform. The sullen eyes of Jan Kalyan suddenly glittered and her hands moved vaguely.

"Presto!" Shayne said, and opened the false bottoms of the boxes. The two rolled paintings fell out. Everyone goggled at them.

"I knew that teddy bear had some part in all this," Shayne said quietly. "The paintings were concealed in the boxes for easy carrying. When Mrs. Kalyan's partner killed Truck he took the box, but the teddy bear fell out and he didn't bother with picking it up. That was a mistake."

"That's the mistake she means?" Gentry growled.

Shayne shook his head. "No, Will. That's the mistake that ended it all. Mrs. Kalyan was talking about the mistake that began it all. Logan."

The art dealer jumped alert. Shayne handed him the two rolled

canvases. Logan unrolled them and looked at them. A brilliant light seemed to glow in Logan's eyes. He stared and stared at each painting in turn laid out on the floor.

"Well," Shayne said.

Logan did not answer. He got down on his hands and knees and studied the paintings like a snake studying its dinner. Then he stood up, brushed absently at his knees, stared down.

"They're Roy Kalyan's work. Two of the best I've ever seen him do. Growth, real growth," Logan said in a voice that made it seem that the art dealer was alone in the room, talking to himself or to the paintings.

"And?" Shayne said.

Logan looked up. "And they're not two of the ones that were supposed to have been burned! No, they're two paintings of Roy's I've never seen before. No one has."

Gentry swore. "So why hide them if they're legitimate paintings?"

"I don't know," Logan said, looked at the woman. "Jan, you found a few paintings no one knew Roy had done?"

The redheaded woman said nothing.

"No," Shayne said, "she didn't find any paintings. She found the painter! You never saw those paintings, Logan, before Kalyan died because they hadn't been painted. Roy Kalyan is alive, and her partner, and a killer!"

VIII

MIKE SHAYNE explained, "That is what Kalyan was hiding. His death was a fake. The life insurance had been paid. That's a crime. In the three years since he was supposed to have died, with his paintings, he's been painting all along. Probably in Brazil. That's why they picked you to sell the paintings to, Logan. You're an expert on Kalyan. You'd have known his work and thought you'd come across unknown works from his past."

Logan nodded. "Yes, I would have. Roy was always eccentric. A new cache of his work would not have been too much of a surprise to me."

"Right," Shayne said, "and that was why he used such a devious means of getting them to you. He didn't want anything to be traced back to him. Of course, he needed someone who could plausibly have found a lot of his paintings. He couldn't use his wife because he wanted her with him. I expect that when we dig into the background of the Mergansers we'll find a connection to Kalyan."

Jan Kalyan spoke. "They were old friends of Roy's, and they were in Tangier with him. Ralph was a painter, too. Only he wasn't very good, and a year ago they came here and opened that toy shop. Ralph is good at making toys and fixing them."

"Why not tell us the rest?" Shayne said.

Jan Kalyan sighed. "I suppose it doesn't matter now. Roy's gone insane and you'll catch him."

Gentry was grim. "We'll catch him."

"He contacted you, Jan?" Logan said. "Told you he was alive, forced you to go with him?"

Jan Kalyan shook her head. "No, I'd always known. I mean, Roy contacted me as soon as I arrived in Tangier after the fire. He hadn't meant to defraud anyone. I mean, it wasn't a plan; it was a kind of accident. But once it happened Roy said it was too good to pass up."

"Accident?" Shayne said.

Yes. You knew him, Ramsey, I suppose he was always a little insane. He'd had some serious trouble in Italy before he went to Tangier. There were men out to kill him. They tried by burning down his studio. He managed to escape with a few paintings. He had a friend visiting him. It was the friend who died."

"The friend looked like him?" Gentry snapped.

"Not really, but he had been wearing Roy's clothes, and some jewelry, and no one knew he was in Tangier. You see, Joe Fraser, that was his name, was a kind of wanderer—no family, no money, no real home, and he had only been in Tangier a day. Roy realized that no one would miss Joe. His few

friends never saw him from year to year, and would think he was just somewhere else."

"So he let Fraser be identified as him?" Logan said.

"Yes, but it was much more casual. The neighbors did identify Fraser as Roy. After that happened, Roy got the idea. It still wasn't for the money. He just realized it would save him from the men who were out to try to kill him.

"Then, when his brother identified the body as Roy, he saw that it would work. Then he thought about the insurances—on his life and on the paintings. I was the only problem. So he waited until I arrived and contacted me. I loved him. He wanted the money, so I went along.

"The money was paid, all of it. Roy went to Brazil. I pretended to be in Europe and joined him in Brazil. We lived high and the money ran out, since he couldn't sell any of his new work."

"Why couldn't he sell his new work?" Gentry snapped.

Logan answered. "A painter can't disguise his work, Chief Gentry. At least, not his real work."

"He realized that," Jan Kalyan said. "He had been working on establishing himself as an unknown Brazilian, and in a few more years it might have worked, but we needed money. He had about twenty new paintings. That was when he got the idea to have the Mergan-

sers pretend to find a new cache of old Kalyans.

"He decided on Logan, as Mr. Shayne says, because Logan knows his work better than anyone else. Only he made a mistake. He got drunk and accidentally included one of the supposedly burned paintings in what he gave to the Mergansers. He didn't discover the mistake until last night."

"And decided to pull out of the whole deal and cover all his tracks," Shayne said.

Jan Kalyan shivered. "I only knew that later. Tonight, when he lured Merganser here and killed him. He would have killed me, too, only—"

"Only I showed up," Shayne said. "What about Harold Truck?"

"He was only a man Roy hired to approach Logan. Just an extra precaution to make it harder to trace back to him. He met Truck in a bar. Truck needed money."

"So he had to kill him because Truck could identify him," Shayne said. "That's about how I figured it."

Jan Kalyan nodded. "The strain, I suppose it finally made him crack. I'd seen it coming, but—"

"Don't blame yourself, Jan," Ramsey Logan said, and looked at Gentry. "Will you charge Mrs. Kalyan with anything?"

"She was an accessory," Gentry said. "At least to fraud."

"It won't be easy to prove with Kalyan insane," Shayne said.

Logan nodded. "I'll help her fight it."

"That's fine," Gentry said, "but right now we've got to catch Kalyan, and that's my department. I will have to take Mrs. Kalyan to Headquarters."

"I'll come along," Ramsey Logan said.

"I won't," Shayne said. "I need sleep."

The police left with Jan Kalyan. Logan followed in his car. Shayne sat for a moment in his own car and smoked a cigarette. He had a momentary twinge of sympathy for the half insane man running and hiding somewhere in the great city. Jumping at shadows like any frightened animal. But it was only momentary. Roy Kalyan had killed at least twice, and would kill again if not stopped.

Shayne made the long trip back to his apartment hotel in silence. He was thinking about Roy Kalyan, who had stumbled into a fraud and had been tempted too much. Fate had given him the chance of hoodwinking the world and he had not been able to resist.

Once started, the rest was only the inevitable steps down a preordained path—accidental fraud, to conscious fraud, to murder. Because a crime was not a success unless you got away with it. And to get away with it more crimes are inevitable.

He also thought about Jan Kalyan, who had gone along with the

fraud. Logan, or someone, had said that she liked money. She probably liked Kalyan, too. It was not always easy to decide exactly what the actions of a wife should be in such a case.

Shayne parked in the garage beneath his building and went up to his apartment. He had not stopped for dinner and was hungry. He broiled a pound of hamburger, made a pot of coffee in his drip-o-lator, and ate the meat with a slim loaf of French bread.

Then he called Gentry to see if anything had happened yet.

"Not yet, Mike. We've got an all points out. The rest is time," Gentry reported.

"If you need me, Will, just holler," Shayne said.

"I will," Gentry said, "and we'll keep an eye out for your paintings."

"What about the Kalyan woman?"

"Logan got her bail until we decide what to charge her with. We persuaded him to take her to The Mayfair Hotel until we get Kalyan. Logan's gone home, and we've got a guard on her."

"Good. I'll be in in the morning if nothing breaks before," Shayne said.

"All right, Mike," Gentry said, and hesitated. "Mike, watch yourself, will you? He's loose and he probably knows what you look like and who you are by now. He's got nothing to lose."



"I'll be careful, Will," Shayne said.

Shayne hung up, showered, and went to bed.

The telephone jarred him from a dream of lobbing endless hand grenades at an enemy that kept on coming no matter how many he killed. He looked groggily at his alarm clock. It read only one o'clock.

The telephone continued to ring.

With a sigh Shayne picked it up. "Yes?"

"Shayne? He called me!"

The voice was that of Ramsey Logan and it was highly agitated.

"Who called you?" Shayne snapped.

Logan was breathing hard. "Roy! Roy Kalyan!"

"Hold it!" Shayne snapped.

He jumped up, went into the bathroom and doused his whole

head and face with cold water. After a moment he came back out, dripping water as he came, lit a cigarette and picked up the receiver again.

"All right," Shayne said, his voice alert now. "Have you told Gentry? Did he say where he was?"

"No, I haven't called Gentry or any police, Shayne, and I'm pretty sure he told me where he was. He told me he might be at an old studio he once had years ago in a loft down near the bay. He—"

"Hang up and call Gentry," Shayne snapped. "Then go back to bed and forget it."

"Listen, Shayne!" Logan insisted hoarsely. "I can't call Gentry. Roy told me that if I came without the police he'd turn himself in to me."

"Are you crazy?" Shayne snapped into the receiver. "The man's an insane killer, and you're the boy who blew the whistle on his little scheme!"

"Please," Logan begged from the other end. "Hear me out, Shayne. I know all that, and I'm scared to death, but he said he would surrender to me. He said he figures if he can get safely into jail and in public view he can get off with an insanity plea. He said he's scared the police will shoot him on sight. He—"

"He's probably right," Shayne agreed. "But what the hell do you care?"

"I care because Jan doesn't want

him dead," Logan said in a flat voice.

"Try again. I don't believe that, somehow."

There was a silence. Then, "He said if the police came he would destroy all his new paintings as well as the few old ones he saved from that fire. Shayne, I can't let that work be destroyed! I just can't! He's a fine painter, whatever else he is."

"You love art so much?" Shayne said coldly.

"Yes, Shayne, I do," Logan said calmly from the other end. "But he also said he would let me sell them and allow me to keep one. Do you have any idea how much—"

"Not enough to get killed for," Shayne stated flatly.

Another silence. "Shayne, I can't let him destroy those paintings. I can't take that chance. He didn't say I couldn't bring you, just no police. I want you to come with me. The two of us—"

"Can get killed twice as dead," Shayne interrupted. "Logan, the man'll be watching for us! No, not me."

"There's practically no light on that street, Shayne. I remember it," Logan insisted. "We can get to the building easily without being seen. I admit there's danger, but—"

"Call Gentry and do it fast. What you have in mind is a crime."

"Not if I bring him in. Some po-

liceman would almost surely be killed."

That much Shayne had to admit. A cornered killer was a dangerous quarry, especially if he was half-insane and had nothing to lose. But that was their job.

"No," Shayne said. "I'm going to call Gentry if you won't."

There was another short silence. "All right, Shayne, but it won't do you any good. You don't know where the loft is, and even if you guess I'll get there before the police. I'll go alone if I have to."

Shayne stared at the telephone for a full ten seconds.

"Okay, Logan. I'll give it a try. Maybe I should strike a blow for art. I'll be ready when you come by."

After he hung up he stared at nothing. He swore. But he could not let a lamb like Logan brace a killer alone.

IX

THE STREET was short and dark and deserted. The black water of the bay glistened in the light at the far end. Mike Shayne and Ramsey Logan stood under the dark street lamp at the corner and looked toward the five-story brick building. A light showed on the top floor at the rear.

"Is that it?" Shayne asked.

"He had his studio on the top floor years ago," Logan said.

Shayne looked up at the street

lamps that were dark all down the block. "It's dark enough, all right. You have a gun?"

"I wouldn't know how to use one," Logan said. "Besides, he wants to surrender."

"Maybe," Shayne said, and took out his own automatic. He had an extra gun in his car, but an amateur with a gun was as dangerous in a shooting match as a killer.

"All right, Logan," the redhead said, "Let's go."

The art dealer nodded and swallowed uneasily. Shayne grinned. It was one thing to talk about going up against a killer; it was another to do it.

"Just stay close to me," Shayne said.

Logan said nothing. Shayne started down the dark street close in to the buildings. He walked fast, one eye on the lighted window above, the other on the shabby entrance to the loft building. He listened closely. Logan came close behind him.

At the entrance Shayne peered around the corner. The dark entrance hall was deserted. Shayne listened and heard nothing. He took a breath, and motioned Logan to follow. He stepped into the entrance and sprinted to the foot of a rickety flight of stairs.

Crouched in the cover of the stairs, Shayne looked upward. The building had once been some kind of office building, probably back in the days of sailing ships. The stairs

went up in a narrow zigzag pattern into total darkness. Kalyan had picked a good hideout. In a building this old there was no elevator. The stairs were the only way up.

"We're going up," Shayne said low to Logan. "Stay close behind and in line so he doesn't have two to shoot at. If I hit the floor you dive too."

"I will," Logan said breathlessly. Shayne nodded and started up. At each half turn between floors Shayne stopped to study the way ahead and above. In this manner, slow but not too slow, the two men went up. At the fourth floor Shayne stopped longer and took a deeper breath.

Logan was staring up, his face pale and scared. Shayne wiped a river of sweat off his face. The art dealer did not seem to sweat, but Shayne was sweating for two. He cursed silently—Logan was too damned inexperienced to know enough to be as scared as he should have been.

For all Shayne knew the crazy artist *could* have been watching them all the way.

"All right," Shayne said. "If he's waiting he'll spot us as soon as we make the halfway turn before the fifth floor. When we reach that point I'm going to go up fast, real fast. Stay close, but don't crowd me. Do whatever I do and do it quick."

"Yes," Logan said. The art dealer was not sweating, but there was

an unnatural brightness to his eyes and his voice was hoarse.

"Right," Shayne said.

He took a firmer grip on his automatic, walked softly up to the last turn before the fifth floor, then broke into a dash up the last flight to the fifth floor. At the top he skidded to the cover of a recessed doorway.

Nothing moved on the fifth floor.

Shayne scanned the corridor ahead. It was empty and silent. Then he heard a voice. Logan was behind him. Shayne listened to the voice that seemed to come from the door near the end of the hall where there was a line of light at the bottom. The voice droned on and on, flat and neutral. Then Shayne recognized it.

"Damn, a radio! Maybe he is going to surrender."

"At least he's there," Logan said. "Probably listening to the police reports."

"Or decoying us," Shayne said.

He stepped out of the doorway and walked quickly now to the door with the light under it. Logan came close behind. At the door Shayne listened. Only the radio droned on. Logan stepped past Shayne, put his hand on the door-knob.

"He expects to see me," Logan said. "I'll have to chance it."

Before Shayne could agree or disagree the art dealer turned the knob quickly and flung the door open. Logan stepped into the room.

Shayne jumped in past him with his automatic ready.

The radio droned brightly on where it stood on a battered table. The room was a large, high-ceilinged loft crammed with paintings. Logan gasped in awe as he looked at the paintings. Shayne did not. He did not look at the paintings. He looked at the figure of a man who lay prone on the floor in front of an easel.

Logan saw the man. "My God, it's Roy! He's shot himself!"

Shayne holstered his automatic and crossed the bare wood floor to the fallen man with Logan close behind him. Shayne saw the blood and the pistol. The heavy revolver was lying just beyond the dead man's right hand. The blood came from a single shot in the head, just behind the right ear.

"Is he—?"

"Yeah," Shayne said, "he's good and dead. Maybe two hours, from the look of the blood."

Shayne stood and considered the scene. A rough stool about the height of a bar stool lay on its side near the body. A jagged rip in the almost-bare canvas on the easel showed where the bullet had come out. The whole added up to a simple picture—Kalyan had been seated on the high stool when he shot himself. The force of the shot knocked him down, knocked over the stool, and the bullet went through the canvas.

"He was working," Logan said,



pointing to the canvas. "It looks like he had just started. His final work. He must have been really psychotic, Shayne. Irrational, I suppose."

"Maybe," Shayne said still letting his grey eyes study the vast loft.

There was nothing he could see that was out of the ordinary. Another table set with a plate and a cup showed where Kalyan had eaten. A cot in the corner was unmade but had not been slept in recently.

"I suppose he had a moment of lucidity," Logan said sadly. "He realized what he'd done, that he'd never paint again, and shot himself."

Shayne agreed. "It looks that way."

He went to the telephone and called Gentry. While he waited for the police, Shayne continued checking out the loft. Logan walked around staring at all the paintings, his eyes glowing with a special excitement.

Shayne found that the refrigera-

tor contained food for at least a week. The shelves were stocked with staples, like coffee. There were two suitcases and a trunk of clothes, most with Rio de Janiero labels. There were boxes of painting supplies. Kalyan had obviously lived here in the loft, not in the tract house where he had killed Merganser.

The sirens screamed into the dark street below, and heavy feet pounded up the stairs. Uniformed policeman poured in through the open door. Gentry came in after them in a cloud of cigar smoke. The Chief looked tired, sleepy and annoyed.

Will Gentry bent over the body of Roy Kalyan without speaking to Shayne or Logan. At last he grunted and stood up.

"Is this really Kalyan this time?" Gentry growled.

Logan nodded: "Yes, Chief. It's Roy."

"I'll make sure," Gentry said. "At least he's really dead. Maybe he did the smart thing. The booby hatch isn't much fun."

Logan signed. "I suppose it would have been too much for Roy. He was a wild thing, Chief Gentry. He had to be free."

"He's free now," Gentry said, and eyed Shayne and Logan. "I'm not so sure about you two. Tell me your fable, Mike, and make it sound good."

Shayne told Gentry the whole story Logan had told him. The

Chief of Police shifted his hard eyes to Logan as Shayne talked. When Shayne finished, Gentry said nothing for a long minute.

"All in the interest of art, eh?" Gentry said.

"Yes, Chief. And I'd risk it again," Logan said quietly.

Gentry's eyes flashed. "Would you now? I'm going to have to think about you. Shayne didn't have much choice, the way you set it up, but you had a choice. You withheld information on a wanted man and that's a felony! I'm going to think about you, Logan."

"He's been dead a while, Will," Shayne said. "Probably as soon as he phoned Logan."

The medical examiner looked up from the body. "Dead maybe two hours. Somewhere between an hour and three hours anyway, I'd say. Single bullet wound, caliber fits the gun. Fits with the slugs in Truck, too, and the ones shot at Shayne."

"He probably hung up on Logan, realized that he couldn't even take the funny farm, and shot himself," Shayne said. "You know, Will, talking to Logan could have brought him back for a while, made him know the game was up. He knew Logan would come for the paintings."

Logan nodded. "Despite it all, Roy was a fine artist. He really lived for art. The rest was all a kind of big charade to him."

"When did he call you, Logan?"

Logan looked at his watch, his eyes troubled. "Just about two hours ago now."

Gentry watched the medical examiner. "What do you say, Doc? Was it suicide?"

"The wound fits, more or less," the ME said. "The angle is a little odd, behind the ear and all, but I've seen it. Probably used his thumb. Considering the rest, his state of mind, I'll stake my claim on suicide."

Gentry nodded. "Wrap it up then. Logan, I'll need a statement from you. You too, Mike. Let's go, the boys can finish up here."

Shayne and Logan left with Gentry. They went down and got into their cars in the dark street and drove to Headquarters. They gave their statements, signed them, and Gentry now sat back and began to look more pleased.

"At least it's over and no one got hurt," the Chief said.

"Are you going to hold me, Chief?" Logan asked.

Gentry's eyes glared. "No, not this time. I should, but we'll call it ambiguous. Get out of here."

Shayne and Logan left. Shayne drove back to his apartment hotel and went to bed. He was asleep within seconds.

He woke up fully awake.

The grey dawn was outside.

Shayne reached for a cigarette, scowling.

Something was wrong, very wrong. Roy Kalyan was no suicide!

X

MIKE SHAYNE smoked in the dawn light as the sun tinged the sky outside over Miami.

"Never!" he said aloud.

Roy Kalyan was not a man to commit suicide. The redhead was suddenly as sure of that as he had ever been of anything. Kalyan was the exact opposite of a suicide, psychologically.

And something nibbled at the edges of his brain. Something that had happened. He could not at the moment place it. Whatever it was, it was something that should not have happened as it did.

"Take it step by step," he told himself aloud.

He got up and sat in a chair that faced the window. The sun hung on the eastern rim of the world as Miami stirred from sleep and came alive below his window.

Roy Kalyan was not the type to kill himself. The artist had killed two people to cover his tracks. Kalyan had been ready to kill more, including his wife, to get away. He was a man who battled and hung on and would never give up. Of that Shayne was now sure.

Kalyan was the type to hole up in that loft and shoot it out, if it came to that. His whole history—the fire in Tangier, the scheme to sell his new paintings—pointed to a man who battled life.

Kalyan was the type to worm his

way out of any trouble. The insanity plea might have worked. In the hands of Logan and Shayne the artist would have had a good chance of beating the rap in a hospital. And even if he hadn't, Kalyan had all the sound of a man who would count on escape later before suicide.

"Think of the wound," Shayne muttered to the dawn.

The ME had said the angle was odd but possible. All right. It was an odd suicide shot. Shayne closed his eyes and pictured the loft.

The theory was that Kalyan had been seated on the stool in front of his canvas when he shot himself. Okay. But Shayne suddenly realized that the bullet hole in the canvas was in the wrong place! Seated at that height, and shooting himself with finger or thumb, the bullet should have hit much lower on the canvas.

Shayne tried it with his hands. A man seated on a stool in that position would almost certainly have had to shoot slightly *downward!* The bullet would have hit much lower on the canvas if it had struck the painting on the easel at all!

But someone standing behind Kalyan might well have shot slightly upward!

Shayne jumped up. Kalyan had not shot himself. Yet it was Kalyan's gun. Shayne began to dress. He did not stop to shave. The small something he could not quite re-

member nibbled still at his mind. He put it out of his mind. It would come.

Dressed, he went down and got his car. He drove fast to the street near the bay. The loft building was as shabby and deserted in the morning light as it had been in the dark the night before. Shayne parked and went into the building.

He climbed the stairs a lot faster this time. He reached the fifth floor and strode along the hall to the door. As he reached the door and put his hand on the knob, he paused. His grey eyes narrowed and he pulled his ear. Something—

He shook his head angrily and tried the door. It was now locked. He used his special ring of keys and stepped into the loft. A chalk outline showed where the body of Roy Kalyan had been. Everything else was the same.

Shayne stopped in the center of the room. There had been food, painting supplies, a cot, all the supplies for a man to hide out and hold out. Now he began to search more carefully. He soon found two rifles and a large supply of ammunition.

"Kalyan was ready all right," he said aloud.

He began to tear the place apart. In a box of bills and papers he found the tickets almost at once. Two tickets on a tramp steamer with the destination—San Paulo, Brazil! Shayne's eyes glittered. At least Kalyan was not giving up at the time he bought these tickets.

The next thing he found, in a small closet down at floor level in the right wall, was a good supply of whisky. At least ten quarts, and three empties. On the sideboard of the sink he now saw another almost empty bottle and a single glass.

The third thing he found was the window. It was the window above the fire escape, and it had been opened. Opened—and then locked!

Shayne studied it closely. There was no doubt. Cobwebs and dust had been disturbed. There were marks in the grime on the fire escape beneath the window. Yet the window was now locked inside.

"All right," he said aloud, "but Kalyan could have stepped out on the fire escape. He could have locked it himself before he shot himself."

Did a man who was about to shoot himself worry about an open window? No, but maybe he had closed it earlier. On a hot Miami night? Why close a window that was open? Shayne looked around. Two other windows were open.

No, someone else had closed that window in a mistaken attempt to conceal the fact that anyone had come into the room by way of the fire escape.

And not been heard by a man on the run?

Why not? Kalyan was at least half insane, arrogant, secure. Probably drunk and working on a paint-

ing. There was another reason against suicide—Kalyan had actually been painting when he died. Everything in the man's history indicated that he was a complete egotist about his work. Shayne did not believe that he would have shot himself just after he had started on a new idea.

Certain now, Mike Shayne continued his search. He tore the loft apart. Looked under every piece of furniture. Checked each canvas. Then he found it. A simple slip of paper that had fallen under the edge of an overhanging rack that held paintings upright.

Shayne held the slip. It was a sales carbon for a sale at The Purple Circus Toy Shop! It was dated yesterday. It was the part of the sales receipt that was kept by the store itself!

Shayne searched the rest of the loft until he was sure he had overlooked nothing. Then he looked at the sales slip again, and left the loft. Down in his car he checked the address of Ralph Merganser.

He drove in the now fully awake morning toward the address of the Mergansers. Now that Kalyan was dead the police guard would have been lifted. He found the address to be a middle-class apartment where men, and a lot of the women, were now leaving for work.

He parked and went into the neat but slowly fading lobby. The Mergansers lived on the second floor in the rear. The lobby door

was open, and Shayne went up in a decent if slow elevator. On the second floor he walked quietly to the door of the apartment. He knocked.

Silence.

Shayne knocked again, harder.

"Who is it?" a voice said. A woman's voice that shook as she spoke.

"Mrs. Merganser? I've got to talk to you."

Silence. Then, "Go away."

"It's me or the police, Mrs. Merganser. My name is Mike Shayne, I'm a private detective," Shayne said through the door.

He moved silently away from the door and touched the automatic in his shoulder holster.

XI

THERE WAS MOVEMENT inside the apartment, and the slow shuffling of feet. The door opened slowly. The heavy-set woman from the toy shop stood there. Her face was tear-stained, and she wore a shabby bathrobe and slippers. But there was something else in her face. Something like fear.

"What do you want?" Mrs. Merganser said.

"Not here," Shayne said. "Inside."

Mrs. Merganser stepped back. Shayne followed her into the room. It was a clean apartment, if not very rich. The morning sun of Miami came in but thinly over a wall outside the windows.

"I want to ask you some questions about Roy Kalyan," Shayne said when he was inside.

She sat on a stuffed chair, shrugged. "Why? Roy's dead. They told me he shot himself. There ain't no more questions now. Roy's dead and Ralph's dead and it's all over."

"Not quite," Shayne said grimly.

The woman did not seem to hear him. She stared at something only she could see on the far wall. Her voice was dull, a monotone.

"I knew it was no good from the start. I told Ralph. No, he had to have the money. He had to paint. He was good with toys, with kids, but he had to paint. We never had any kids. Paint, that was all he talked about. Then Roy came with that scheme."

Shayne let her talk. There was something wrong about the way she was talking. She meant what she was saying. The grief and bitterness were there, but there was something else. A wariness. As if part of her were standing back and watching the other part of her. Like a split personality, one part honest and feeling, the other part scared and watchful.

"Roy Kalyan and his scheme! I knew. I told Ralph: I said don't, don't!"

A tear coursed down her ravaged face. Shayne watched her carefully. There was a suspicious bulge in the pocket of her dressing

gown. Shayne held out the sales slip.

"This is yours, isn't it?" Shayne said quietly.

She blinked. "Is it? I don't know."

"It's the carbon of a sales slip from your toy shop dated yesterday."

"Then it is," she said, but her voice was unsteady.

"Why did you go to Kalyan's loft?"

She blinked again. "Loft?"

"Where he was hiding out. He'd been there some time. You knew where it was. You guessed he'd be there."

A change came over her voice. The dull despair faded and in its place came the hard wariness he had seen lurking in her.

"Did I?"

"You did. You could have told the police, especially after he tried to kill you too. But you didn't tell the police. You went to his loft."

Her lip curled. "Prove it."

"I don't have to. I have this slip you must have dropped. Your car is missing. I expect you took a taxi. It shouldn't be hard to find the driver. A taxi man would remember taking someone to that area. It's an unusual destination at that hour."

Mrs. Merganser said nothing. She licked her lips, all wariness now. She watched him.

"I don't think you killed him. The pattern isn't right for you, but you've got a gun, and—"



Her hand moved into her pocket. Shayne moved faster. His big hand closed on her hand inside the pocket of the dressing gown. For a long five seconds they faced each other eye to eye. The woman breathed heavily. Shayne's hand squeezed. Pain showed on her face. Then she went limp and Shayne's hand came out of her pocket with a small, .32 caliber pistol.

"Now tell me," Shayne said.

She shuddered. "I knew about the loft. He killed Ralph. He stabbed Ralph down in cold blood. He tried to come for me, but I didn't care about that. After he got away I remembered the loft. I knew Roy. He'd never go far from those paintings of his, no matter what."

"There was a police guard here."

Her heavy face smiled thinly. "They were protecting me, watching for Ralph. There's a rear door here, locked inside, and they didn't watch it. I went down the service elevator. I got a taxi to that loft. I had the gun."

"You went to kill him?"

She nodded. "I wanted to kill him so bad. I figured he'd get off with an insanity plea. I heard the cops talking about that. They said he'd get off, go to an asylum. He wouldn't die, and he had to die! I wanted him dead!"

Shayne watched her face suffuse with rage. There was the split personality again. Now the honest part was in a rage, out to kill Kal-

yan. But the other part still stood back and waited.

"So you went to the loft. How did you get in?"

She laughed. "It was easy. I just walked up. I told him who I was through the door. He let me in. He was drunk, dead drunk, the damned arrogant fool! Maybe he was scared. I guess he was so scared he had to get drunk. He was even working on a painting!"

"All right. You had the gun," Shayne prompted.

"I took it out of my pocket. I guess that was when I dropped that sales slip. I wasn't thinking. All I knew was that he was a mad dog and I was going to kill him! They'd give me a medal!"

"Why didn't you?"

Mrs. Merganser brushed her eyes, stared at the wall as if mystified. "I—couldn't. I mean, there we were. I had the gun. He was scared, but he laughed, too. He said I couldn't kill him or anyone. He said he could kill, he had guts, but I didn't have guts. He said Ralph was dead and what good would it do me to kill him. He said it'd be murder, even if he was wanted."

"He was right," Shayne said.

She shook her head. "I couldn't do it anyway. He got the gun away from me. He said he could kill me. What difference would it make? Only, he said, he didn't want to kill me any more. He figured everyone knew about him by

now. He said there was no reason to silence me now. And he had a deal."

Shayne came alert. "A deal? What kind of deal?"

"He said he had tickets on a tramp steamer. He said he needed some cash and a disguise and a car. He said he'd sell me all his paintings, the new ones that were all clear and okay. He'd put it in writing, a real bill-of-sale. They'd all be mine. They'd be worth a fortune, he said, after all this. All I had to do was get him what he wanted, bring it there, keep quiet, and I had all his paintings."

Her eyes glittered madly as she spoke. Shayne watched her. He saw the greed. She had wanted those paintings. Shayne saw the taste of a fortune in her eyes, and, perhaps, the fame of owning all the Kalyans after the story became known.

"You wanted those paintings," Shayne said.

She licked her lips. "Of course I wanted them. He was right, Ralph was dead. I figured they'd get him sooner or later. Why not get rich first? Those paintings didn't have no blood on them."

"They do now," Shayne said.

Fear filled her eyes. "I didn't kill him!"

"What did you do?"

"I went to get what he wanted," she said. "I had about five thousand in the bank, only I couldn't get that until today. I got the dis-

guise and come home to wait. Then —then they told me what had happened to Roy."

She glared at Shayne, all greed now. "Ralph was dead! Now Roy was dead and I didn't even have my deal! I could have at least killed him myself! Oh damn, damn!"

Shayne's eyes glowed now. "So he was planning his escape, and he was waiting for you to complete a deal. What time did you get there?"

"About eleven o'clock," she said sullenly.

"When did you leave?"

"I don't know. Maybe eleven-thirty."

"Did you see anyone else," Shayne snapped. "At any time?"

Mrs. Merganser shook her head. "No."

"Think hard. Was the fire escape window open?"

"Fire escape? Hell, how do I know? Some windows were open. It was hot as hell up there."

"And he was working on his painting?"

She nodded. "Yes, sitting on that stool in front of it and laughing like a crazy man. I should of killed him!"

"Someone did it for you," Shayne said. "Did anything else happen? Anything at all?"

"No, noth—" She stopped. "Wait. He had a phone call. I remember I thought it was awful funny for a guy on the run to be getting phone calls."

"Who from?" Shayne demanded, alert.

"I don't know. I mean not for sure, only I think it was from Jan."

"His wife?"

"Yeh. He laughed like hell, told her she was one lucky bitch to be alive. He told her he guessed the paintings would be all hers now, as long as she kept quiet. He told her he'd burn them if the police came near him. He said she better pray he got away or all the paintings would go up in smoke! He was damned if he'd leave them to a world that killed him."

She laughed. "Of course, he was winking at me the whole time he was telling her this. I mean, he was going to sell them to me, see?"

"Did he make any calls out?"

"Not while I was there."

Shayne bit a fingernail. "But you're pretty sure it was the wife, Jan, who called him?"

She nodded.

"And he told her he would burn the paintings if the cops took him in the loft?"

"That's what he said. I figure that was maybe a lot for my benefit. So I wouldn't double-cross him."

Shayne nodded thoughtfully. His grey eyes were like points of polished steel now. He stood up and started for the door. He stopped, turned, and laid her pistol on a table. She just looked at the pistol. He could see the ravaging split in her personality still battling inside her: the woman who had lost

her husband and was torn by grief; and the woman who had lost a big money deal and was eaten by the regret of greed.

It would be a long time before Mrs. Merganser knew which loss was hurting her more. Perhaps she never would know, and that would destroy her.

Shayne walked out and back down to his car.

XII

LUCY HAMILTON looked up as Mike Shayne came in. The brown-eyed girl smiled.

"Continental Insurance called, Michael. They say you did a good job. The police contacted them. Check on the way."

"Thanks, Angel."

"It's a terrible story, isn't it, Michael?" Lucy said. "All that greed and murder."

"A terrible story, Angel," Shayne said grimly.

He did not add that the story was not yet over, but strode on into his private office. He sat down, lit a cigarette, and frowned out the high window as he thought. He thought for some five minutes, the creases in his forehead deepening every minute. Then his grey eyes flashed, and he slapped the desk hard with the flat of his hand.

He picked up the telephone. "Get me Will Gentry, Angel."

He chewed his thumbnail until Lucy buzzed.

"Will? Anything new?"

"Just cleaning up, Mike," the Chief said. "Ballistics checks the gun out as the same one that killed Truck and was shot at you. It looks open and shut. No prints on the gun except Kalyan's. Smudged, but that fits suicide."

"What about the wife, Will?"

"What about her?" Gentry asked.

"Did she leave her hotel last night?"

"No. She was under guard. We told her this morning and released her from protection. She's still on bail until the district attorney figures what to charge her with."

"You're sure she couldn't have slipped out last night?"

"Absolutely. There's only one door out of that hotel room," Gentry said. "What's up, Mike? You've got something on your mind?"

"I'm not sure, Will. Maybe just a pipe dream. What did you find out about Dennis Wills and Alice Hope?"

"On the Wills guy nothing, except that he's nervous as hell about something. On the Hope woman we dug up a skeleton. It seems that what she didn't want to tell you was that she's been watching Logan."

"What?" Shayne snapped.

Gentry chuckled. "That's right. I guess she's out to get him, you know? So when he works late she watches from across the street from the gallery. A taxi driver took her there from the restaurant the

night Truck was shot. We talked to her, and she admits she was there, but in a doorway up the street from you in the opposite direction from where Truck was shot. She didn't see anything, and after we came she went home."

Shayne rubbed his chin. "Thanks, Will."

"You want to tell me what's bothering you, Mike?"

"Not yet, Will. It's just a little hunch. I'll get back to you if it becomes more."

Shayne hung up and continued to think with a heavily furrowed brow. Then he picked up the telephone again and called the Miami Public Works Department. He talked for a moment, then waited a full two minutes before he hunched over the telephone and listened. His eyes gleamed. He hung up, clapped his panama on his shock of red hair, and strode out of his office without even a word to Lucy Hamilton.

His secretary watched him go with surprise on her pretty face.

In his car on Flagler Street Shayne drove straight to The Logan Gallery. He parked and walked quietly into the gallery. He heard Logan talking inside his office, but he passed on to the small office of Dennis Wills.

Wills looked up as Shayne came in. His face was pale. Shayne sat down across the desk from Wills and just stared at the man. Wills licked his lips.

"You want to see me, Mr. Shayne?" Wills said.

Shayne just stared at the man. Then the redhead leaned forward. "What are you so nervous about, Wills?"

"Nervous?" Wills quavered. "Who says I'm nervous? Of course I am not—"

"I say you're nervous."

Wills fluttered his hands. "Well, maybe I am. I'm always nervous. I have bad nerves."

"No," Shayne said.

"No? No what?" Wills said.

"No this isn't just bad nerves. This is a bad conscience."

Wills blanched and looked around his small office as if searching for some escape. Shayne's grey eyes followed the man's every move. Twice Wills opened his mouth to say something, and twice he closed it again without speaking. The junior partner seemed to be having difficulty swallowing.

Shayne spoke. "You told Kalyan that Logan suspected him and had called Continental Insurance. Why?"

Wills tried to swallow, but his throat was too dry. "No, I didn't tell Roy. I didn't know Roy was alive."

"You told him. There was no other way he could have found out his danger. He suspected when he discovered the mistake he'd made with the supposedly burned painting, but he couldn't have been so scared he'd have resorted to mur-

der unless he knew how close we were to him."

"Not him," Wills said. "Her. I told her, Jan. I—I saw her here, near the gallery, and then I heard Logan calling the insurance company. I knew she was in trouble. Her, Jan, you understand? I didn't know about Roy."

"All right," Shayne said, "but why? Why warn her?"

Wills wiped sweat from his face. "You've got to know about the old days, about all of us. We were all friends. Close, you know, real close. I guess I was in love with Jan. Oh, I know it was ridiculous. I was too old, too timid, too poor. Jan liked her men stronger, younger. Logan was in love with her, too, but she chose Roy."

"And Miss Hope was in love with Roy, but he took Jan. A cosy little nest of snakes," Shayne said.

"It wasn't like that. It was—well, exciting, almost selfless. Oh, Roy was the egomaniac. Roy was the brilliant one. We all catered to Roy, yes, but we wanted to. I guess we were happy. Alice wasn't in love with Roy. That's just something I say to needle her. It was always Logan for Alice, except he wanted Jan."

"How did it all break up?"

"Roy got tired, and he and Jan got married. They left Miami, and that was the end of it. We stayed on here. Then Roy died, or we thought he had died, and Jan just stayed on in Europe. Until I saw her, and

I heard Logan talking to the insurance company, and you showed up."

"When did you call Jan?" Shayne asked.

"That night," Wills said. "The night you were watching for Truck for the third time. In the early evening."

"And she told Roy, and Roy panicked and tried to murder his way to safety."

Wills was white. "I never thought. I mean, I never dreamed anything like that would happen. I thought Jan would just get away."

"You thought wrong. Where were you tonight, Wills?"

Wills blinked. "Tonight? Why, at home. I was there all night. I usually am at home."

"Alone again?"

"Yes."

"What time was it when Jan Kalyan called you?"

"Jan didn't call me. Why should she?" Wills said bitterly.

"Maybe because she needed you. Roy was going to burn all his paintings if the police cornered him."

"She didn't call me," Wills said.

Shayne watched the man, and then stood up. "Maybe not. Don't go anywhere for a while, Wills."

The detective turned on his heel and walked out of the small office of the junior partner. He went the corridor of the gallery and stopped at the door to Logan's office. He stepped through the door.



Logan and Jan Kalyan looked up at him.

XIII

THE ART DEALER and the widow were seated around Logan's desk with papers spread out. Shayne stepped to the desk and glanced down at the papers. They were lists of Roy Kalyan's paintings.

"You don't waste time," Shayne said.

Logan smiled. "Not a minute, Shayne. Those paintings belong to Jan now. We want to have a full inventory to give to the police when they release them."

Shayne sat down and smiled. "Good thinking. I guess they're worth a lot now. How many are there?"

"At least twenty. Jan isn't quite sure," Logan said, and rubbed his hands. "Jan's going to let me handle them."

"Why?" Shayne asked, his grey eyes turning to look at the beautiful widow.

"Logan is a first-rate dealer," Jan Kalyan said.

Logan laughed happily. "Tell him all of it, Jan."

Shayne said, "Yes, tell me all of it."

Jan Kalyan smiled at Logan. "We're going to be married, Mr. Shayne."

"Just like that? You don't mourn for long, do you?" Shayne said. "Roy isn't even off the autopsy table yet, much less buried."

Logan scowled. "You've got no call to judge like that, Shayne. If you must know, Jan and I have known each other for years as I told you. I knew her before Roy. I've always loved her."

The art dealer smiled softly at the beautiful widow. Ramsey Logan had all the marks of a schoolboy in love with his teacher.

"Only she loved Roy," Shayne said. "She'd have stuck to Roy no matter what while he was alive, wouldn't she?"

Logan and Jan Kalyan both stared at Shayne. The detective lounged easily, his grey eyes blank and neutral.

"Even if he's put away she has to wait seven years or so, right? I think she might have stayed mar-

ried to Roy no matter what if he hadn't died."

"But he did die," Logan said. "He's old history now."

"So he is," Shayne said, "and you have the paintings. Or you will have them when you marry Jan. Right?"

Both Logan and Jan Kalyan said nothing. Shayne mused.

"You almost didn't have them at all. I mean, if the police had trapped Kalyan in that loft he'd have destroyed them."

Logan seemed puzzled. "But you know that. That's why we went to try to take him. I told you that."

"So you did. Roy called you and made a deal. He told you where he was, and said he'd surrender to you. If the police came he'd destroy the paintings."

"You know that!" Logan cried.

Shayne shook his head. "No, I don't know that. I know you told me that. What I know is something else."

Logan exploded. "What is all this? Damn it, Shayne, the case is closed and we have work to do."

Jan Kalyan had said nothing for a long time. She was watching Mike Shayne closely. Shayne acted as if he did not even hear Logan.

"What I know," Shayne went on, "is that Roy Kalyan had tickets on a tramp steamer for Brazil, that he was trying to arrange a whole escape route and plan. What I know doesn't tell me he had any idea of surrendering to anyone. It also

doesn't tell me that Roy Kalyan was a suicide!"

The silence in the office of the art dealer was as thick as the mud of a deep swamp. Jan Kalyan was still watching Shayne. Logan was blinking furiously, shaking his head in complete incredulity.

"What else could—" Logan began.

"Murder," Shayne said, "that's what else. Roy Kalyan was murdered. He was in that loft, drunk and arrogant. He was working on a painting, maybe his last and he knew it. He even had a hope that he might arrange an escape. I suppose he was intent on his work, on his plans.

"Someone came up the fire escape, in through the window, and got Kalyan's pistol from wherever it was, probably in plain sight. This person crept up and shot Kalyan in the back of the head, arranged it to look like a suicide, closed the window, and went out the door and down the front way."

"But that's ridiculous!" Logan cried. "Why would anyone kill a man who was one jump ahead of being killed by the police?"

Shayne smiled. "For two reasons, Logan. First, precisely because Kalyan was one jump ahead of the police. Suicide would look absolutely right, and the police would probably never dream that anyone would bother to kill Kalyan. I mean, as you said, it would seem stupid to kill a man like that."

"And so it would be—stupid!" Logan said.

"Not if Kalyan was going to burn a fortune in paintings if the police got to him," Shayne said. "And that was exactly what he told his wife he was going to do."

"No, I—" Jan Kalyan began.

"Don't bother," Shayne snapped. "It just happens that there was a witness. Mrs. Merganser was there in the loft when Roy told you he would burn those paintings! *Your* paintings, Mrs. Kalyan. You like money, you need money. Those paintings are going to be worth a fortune. You both admit that."

"Roy told you he would destroy your paintings. You couldn't allow that, no. You knew where he was. You knew the police would believe a suicide. You had no more use for Roy. Not only had he tried to kill you, he was as good as dead and he wouldn't be worth much dead, in prison, or in an asylum."

Logan cried, "But she was under police guard, Shayne! She never left that hotel!"

Shayne nodded. "That's right. She didn't leave the hotel, but she made a telephone call. I haven't checked, but it had to go through the switchboard at the hotel and they'll have a record. She called you, Logan! Kalyan didn't call you. She did. She told you where he was and what he had said he would do with that fortune in paintings."

"No!" Logan cried.

"Yes," Shayne barked. "Kalyan

was planning an escape, not a deal to surrender. And he didn't kill himself. You got the call from Mrs. Kalyan. She told you the score. You had a double reason for killing him—the paintings and her! With him dead you could marry her, the way you'd always wanted to, and have the paintings, too. Maybe you'd have taken a chance on the police killing him, except that he really might have burned those paintings. That you couldn't stand. You're honest, Logan, but all those paintings were too much temptation."

This time the silence in the office was a living thing, a breathing life that seemed to enfold the three people who sat there. Jan Kalyan had still not taken her eyes from Mike Shayne. Now she slowly turned her beautiful head to look at Logan. She was waiting. Logan laughed a laugh that was more snarl than humor.

"Prove it! All you have are guesses. Let's say Jan did call me. So what? I went her bail; I'm her friend. Of course she would call me."

Shayne nodded. "True, but I can probably determine that you only got one call about that time. Even if I can't it doesn't matter. You gave yourself away twice, Logan. Two little errors I missed the first time around, but I've got them now."

"Errors?" Logan scowled. "What errors."

"First, a little mistake I saw but

it didn't register until just a while ago. It's really what tipped me off."

Logan laughed. "You're stalling, Shayne."

"No, just building a little tension," Shayne said, and smiled. "You remember when we went up to that loft? How careful we were, how cautious? You acted beautifully. You seemed really scared. You weren't sweating the way I was, which should have tipped me, but it didn't. You weren't really scared at all, and your sweat glands knew it. You couldn't fake the sweat. You see, you knew he was already dead."

"Come on, Shayne! Sweat? Really!" Logan said.

"No, not the sweat. That's just a thought. The real mistake was what you did at the door. You just reached down and opened that door as easily and boldly as you please. You stepped right into a room where a multiple killer was supposed to be waiting."

Shayne grinned and shook his head and Logan said nothing.

"It was all wrong," Shayne went on. "First, you didn't knock. Now anyone knocks at a door when they think someone is waiting behind the door for them. Especially if that someone is a nervous killer on the run."

"Second, you didn't even try the door! You reached down and opened it as if you knew it wasn't locked! How would you have

known that the door wasn't locked unless you had come out that way earlier and left it open yourself?"

Shayne smiled. "No, Logan, you didn't knock because you knew he was already dead. Why knock for a dead man? You knew the door was unlocked. You walked right in. Any sane man in that situation would have knocked, announced who he was, expected the door to be locked, and gone in warily when it was unlocked!"

XIV

JAN KALYAN spoke her first words in ten minutes. She looked at Ramsey Logan. "You fool!"

"You killed him, Logan," Shayne said. "You went there about eleven-thirty or twelve, shot him, went back home, and cooked up that cock-and-bull story for my sake to get me there to discover the 'suicide' with you," Shayne hammered.

"You can't prove a damned thing!" Logan cried.

"Yes, I can. There's the call from Jan. There's the angle of the shot, the way it went *upward* from behind. There's all the proof that Roy Kalyan was planning to escape not kill himself or surrender. And there's one more little detail."

Logan had become suddenly calm. "There better be more. You can't prove what Jan said to me. I had other calls; some of them could have been Roy. The rest of it is all conjecture. He could have



shot himself at that angle, and he could have changed his mind. After all, he was insane."

Shayne nodded. "All right. Remember what you said to me about that street? That it was very dark? We couldn't be seen? The reason was that all the street lamps were out. Now we've got a pretty good city here. I got to wondering just how long they had been out? I called the Works Department. Those street lights had blown out at exactly nine-twenty-two that night!"

Shayne smiled. "The only way you could have known that that street was so dark was to have been there earlier that same night! It's public record."

Logan considered this as he looked straight at Shayne. The art dealer licked his lips slowly. Logan blinked as if ticking off the points against him, and how good they were. Finally he began to nod.

"All right. You know I was

there, and that means I probably killed him," Logan said slowly. "But it's all your word about what I said and did. I'll deny all of it. You know the truth, Shayne, but no jury will convict me on your word alone. They couldn't even get an indictment."

Shayne rubbed his chin. "Well, the police will do a paraffin test that should prove you fired a gun. With the rest of it that should make a fair case. Anyway, I've got a strong hunch I'm not the only one who knows you were there. I think you were followed. And I think that now that you're going to marry Jan Kalyan, that person will talk."

Shayne whirled as he finished. A wolfish grin spread over his big face. Alice Hope stood just outside the door. Mike Shayne nodded pleasantly to her.

"Come in, Miss Hope. I thought I heard you listening out there. He's going to marry her, Miss Hope, and live rich and happy ever after. He's never going to look at you."

"Alice!" Logan cried. "Don't—"

Alice Hope turned blank, deadly eyes toward Logan. "You are going to marry her. She doesn't really care about you. She just likes money, but you'll marry her. Rich and happy. And me? How long I've waited, hoped—"

Alice Hope flicked her eyes toward Shayne. "I followed him, Mr. Shayne. I've been following him for years. I saw him come out of his apartment and drive to that

loft. He went up the fire escape. There was a shot, and he came out the front running."

"Aaggh—" Logan cried an inarticulate cry and lunged for his pocket:

Shayne was on him in a bound. For a moment the two men stood there face to face. Logan's hand was in his pocket, and Shayne's hand was also in Logan's pocket. Shayne bent the man back and back. Pressed down on the hand in the pocket. Logan gave a sharp cry and his hand went limp.

Shayne pushed Logan back and his hand came out of Logan's pocket with a .32-caliber automatic in it.

"You said you didn't own a gun. Tsk-tsk," Shayne said.

Logan leaned against the desk, holding his wrist, hatred deep in his eyes.

"You still can't prove it! She's a frustrated old maid! She's lying. A good lawyer will crucify her! A jealous bitch lying about me!"

Shayne nodded. "Maybe so. I'll admit you might beat the rap with everything we have. On the other hand, you probably won't beat it. You might make a deal with the district attorney, get off with twenty years. Then again, you might get the chair. I'd say it's fifty-fifty, and that's good odds."

"You bet it's good!" Logan snarled.

Shayne looked at Jan Kalyan. "Fifty-fifty, and that includes Mrs. Kalyan. She an accessory this time



before the fact. That makes her an accomplice. I'd say it's fifty-fifty for her, too: Unless she makes a deal, sews up our case for us."

Ramsey Logan looked at Jan Kalyan. The beautiful woman had not moved an inch since it all began. Now she blinked, looked at Logan, looked at Shayne, and then stared straight ahead for a full minute.

"Jan?" Logan said.

Shayne smiled. "Two-to-one she's going to sell you out, Logan."

Jan Kalyan's eyes narrowed and looked at Shayne. She held her gaze on him for a full fifteen seconds without flinching.

"I called him," Jan Kalyan said. "I told him where Roy was, and what he was going to do with the

paintings. I told him that Roy was drunk. But that was all I did. I never left my room, I had no knowledge of what he planned to do or what he did do."

She looked now at Logan with the same unflinching gaze. "Until, of course, he told me only an hour ago that he had shot Roy, exactly as you have deduced he did." She looked back at Shayne. "And I'll sign that at the right time."

Shayne nodded. Logan seemed unable to know just what to do. He stood there against the desk. He looked at Jan Kalyan, and then he looked away. Finally he sat down in a chair. His face became a mask of puzzlement, like a man seeing something so incredible there was no way to believe it.

"But it was so certain," Logan said to no one at all. "It was so easy. I mean, he was a wanted man, a killer. I couldn't possibly be caught. It wasn't like killing someone. I mean, Roy was as good as dead, almost really dead. I—I just had to have the paintings, have her. I—"

Ramsey Logan seemed to be trying to think of something else to say. But the art dealer couldn't think of anything at all.

Mike Shayne went to the phone and called Will Gentry.

THE ONLY MAGAZINE featuring MIKE SHAYNE every issue

More than a thousand men died in the bloody gang wars of Chicago. Merciless, without hope or pity they were, the savage armies that fought under the bloody banners of Capone and O'Bannion. Of them, the most vicious of all was a devil named Jack McGurn.

You'll meet him in—

The INSIDE STORY of THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE

A True Story of Gangdom Guns

by DAVID MAZROFF

SEVEN BLOOD-SPATTERED men sprawled on the floor of the big garage in crazy, twisted heaps. Six of them were dead, the seventh would die within an hour.

Behind the corpses, the brick wall, dripping with blood and bits of human flesh, gaped with countless holes torn out by heavy-caliber submachineguns. That more than one machinegun was used in the killings was obvious.

George "Bugs" Moran, leader of Chicago's North Side mob, stared at what had once been part of his gang, gave a violent shudder, turned to the group of white-faced

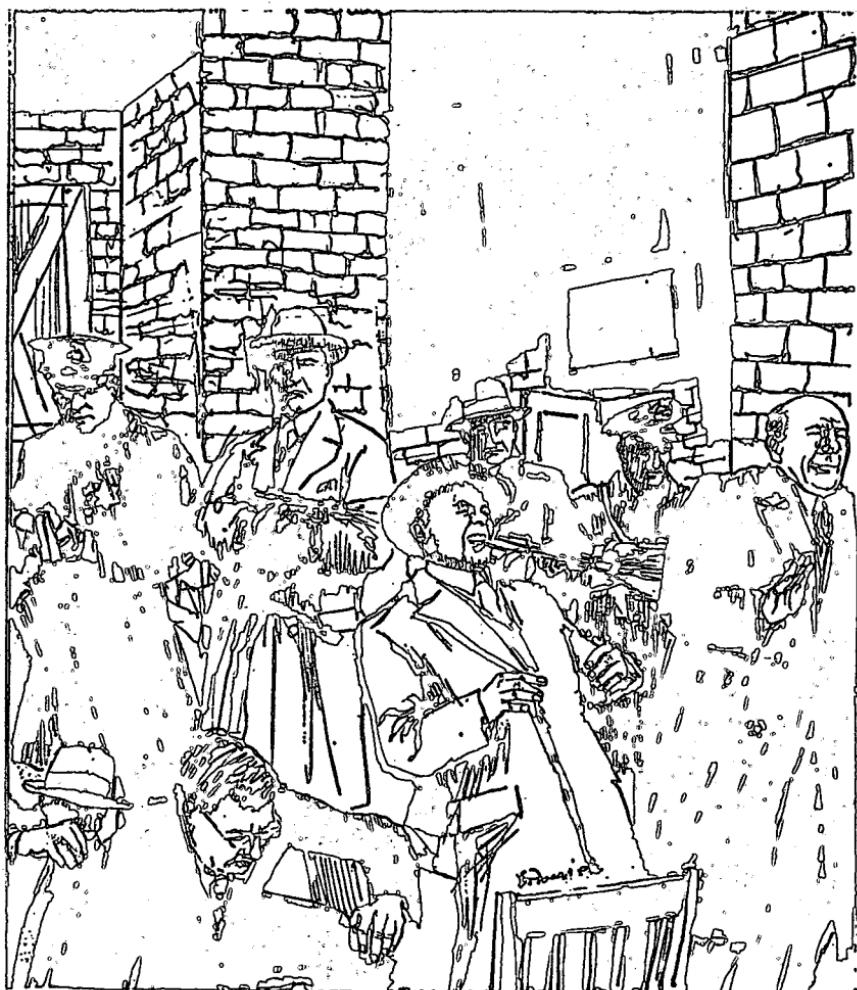
cops who had answered the frenzied alarm, and said, "Only that damned lousy maniac Al Capone kills like that."

He was wrong.

Al Capone ordered it and approved it, but the man who had insisted on it, planned it, joyously wielded one of the hot machineguns, was Jack McGurn, an abysmally amoral gunman and killer.

The other machinegunner was a man named Fred Burke, a St. Louis gunman, robber, and killer, a member of the then notorious Egan's Rats gang, which operated openly and in utter defiance of the

Long and bloody were the gang wars of Chicago in the twenties. A veritable who's who of murder formed the supporting cast, the infamous ones who fought and died under the bloody banners of Capone, Bugs Moran and the rest. In succeeding issues of "Mike Shayne's Mystery Magazine," famed crime story writer David Mazroff will re-create for you some of those characters and the incredible way they lived and died. You'll meet Pretty Boy Floyd, Bonnie and Clyde, a host of ghostly merchants of evil who killed and maimed and ravaged so that the hijackers, the brothels, the bookie empires might prosper and live. Watch for these big true feature stories.



law during the twenties and early thirties.

One of the cops in the garage said to Moran, "Have you had trouble with Capone recently?"

Moran cursed and spat on the floor. "That crazy Capone gives everybody trouble. He wants every inch of Chicago and he will kill a thousand men, five thousand men, to get it."

"Then you're sure that Capone was behind this?" another detective asked.

"Like I'm standing here. No one else in the world would do this." Moran cursed again. "Capone kills like a tiger in the jungle, without mercy. Anybody and everybody. I'll get him! I'll get the bastard!" he swore.

"You better leave the getting to us, Moran," the detective said. "That's the trouble in this town. You guys have been getting each other. That's what brought this on. By the way, where were you when this happened?"

"I was on my way here. I had an appointment. I was delayed by ten minutes or I would have got it too. That was probably the idea."

"Who knew you had this appointment?"

"Only the guy I had it with. And Frank Gusenberg. And now Frank is dead. Dead! All of them dead! Look at them. Dead! Slaughtered like animals in the stockyards!"

"Take it easy, Moran. We'll get

them, the guys who did it. Every one of them."

The detective turned to two uniformed cops. "You two stay here. The meat wagon should be here in a few minutes. After the bodies are removed I don't want nothing touched. Let only authorized personnel in here."

"Yes, sir," one of the uniformed cops answered. "It's awful. Seven men. My God!"

"Yeah, sure. Pretty awful. The worst I've seen." He turned to Moran, "Let's go, George. To the Bureau. I want to ask you a few more questions."

"I want to call my lawyer," Moran insisted.

The detective grunted. "You better be thankful you're not calling for a priest. Let's go. This isn't an arrest."

BEFORE JOINING the Capone mob to become its executioner, McGurn, born Vincent Gebardi, murdered five men in reprisal for the gunshot slaying of his stepfather, Angelo DeMora, a sugar dealer and alcohol cooker who sold his wares to Capone.

McGurn first turned up in official records when he appeared at the Cook County coroner's office on January 8, 1923, to testify at the inquest into his stepfather's death. He was then only nineteen years old. That was the only time in his lurid career that he appeared before an official body

without a charge of murder against him.

In the years that followed he built up some two score arrests, and in each instance the charge was homicide! He was never convicted by the law. Gangland tried him, however, and when they did, they convicted him.

McGurn was born in 1904, on Chicago's South Side, in the Tenderloin which housed the brothels of the notorious Everleigh Sisters, Emma Duval, Black May, and about two hundred others of lesser fame.

Surrounding the whorehouses were a host of saloons, bookie joints, gambling houses, opium resorts and other haunts of sin. In the daytime it was an ugly and dirty scene. At night it was garish and blatant. Here, McGurn as a boy, rolling drunks, running errands for the whores and madams, picking up the wisdom and ways of the street, got his education.

He was introduced to sex at fourteen, and to disease at fifteen, and from that moment on he hated whores. Whenever he caught one on the street alone he would beat her unconscious. One time a young prostitute went after him with a knife in reprisal for a beating and he almost killed her with his fists.

After murdering the five killers of his stepfather, he came to the attention of Al Capone, who had built up the mob with tough young hoods willing to do what they were

told, and who were not reluctant about toting a gun or using it. McGurn was an ideal candidate.

"Stick with me," Capone told McGurn. "Do like you're told and you'll wear tailor-made clothes and carry a pocketful of important money."

"I'll stick with you, all the way."

Soon after joining the mob McGurn introduced his own peculiar style of battering-ram assaults. He invented the one-way ride, and brought the machinegun to its ultimate as an instrument of human destruction. As nearly as can be estimated, he killed at least sixty men, give or take a few.

With his arrival on the scene as a Capone mobster, all the pent-up hatred and bitter animosities of gangland were suddenly turned loose. Machineguns blared in blazing barrages and the sawed-off shotguns crooned their graveyard lullabies. Murder tripped over the heels of murder in a mad orgy of death. It was not gangland warfare but butchery.

One day Capone called McGurn into his suite on the sixth floor of the Lexington Hotel, one of the gang's operating centers, situated on the corner of Michigan Boulevard and 22d Street. "Spike O'Donnell and his five brothers are getting too big for their pants," he said. "They got no business on the South Side anyway. That's our territory. All of it. Y'unnerstand, Jack?"

"Sure."

"They hang out in Joe Klepka's saloon. You know where it's at?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"It's at fifty-three fifty-eight South Lincoln Street. There's two entrances. Front and back. Take Frank McErlane along. Danny McFall will drive. Get everyone that's in the place."

"Right."

The order McGurn accepted was of no more import to him than if he had been told to run down to the delicatessen store and bring back some sandwiches and coffee. When McGurn, McErlane, and McFall—the "Three Bad M's", as they came to be known—reached Klepka's saloon, McGurn said, "Frank, you watch the front; in case some of them O'Donnells runs out this way. I'll go in the back way and try to catch them with their pants down."

"Go ahead. I'll take care of this end."

When McGurn rushed into the saloon through the back door, Spike and Walter O'Donnell, both unarmed, saw him and leaped through a side window. Not so Jerry O'Connor, a mild-mannered Irishman who guarded O'Donnell trucks when they delivered beer to saloons.

McGurn marched the hapless victim out the front door, slammed him up against the building, leveled a sawed-off shotgun at the thoroughly frightened O'Con-

nor and blew his face from his head with a single blast. McErlane then strode over the dead man, walked calmly into the saloon, aimed his shotgun at the back bar and emptied both barrels.

"What did you do?" McGurn asked when Frank McErlane came out.

McErlane laughed loudly. "I just killed about a hundred bottles of bad whiskey."

"Come on," McFall shouted from the car. "The cops will be here in a minute."

"Keep your pants on, Danny," McErlane replied. "We got lots of shells left."

Unlike McGurn, who was to evolve into what passed as a polished gentleman when he wasn't on business, McErlane was a bum. His face was an index of his character. It was fat and red, with a grim, unsmiling mouth and narrow glittering eyes like those of a vicious boar hog. He was heavily built but powerful, quick and as hard as granite.

The traditional bad man is supposed to be quiet and speak in a soft tone. Not so McErlane. He was a loud-mouth. He drank heavily, thus putting himself at the mercy of his enemies. He was so thoroughly feared, however, that no one dared take a chance with him. His two guns never were out of his reach, awake or asleep. Like McGurn, there was no pity or remorse on him. Neither plea for mercy nor



JACK McGURN

the helplessness of his victims moved him to compassion.

When the trio returned to the Lexington Hotel Al Capone was awaiting them. His face held a look of smiling satisfaction, because he was certain that his two prize killers had carried out the task he had assigned them, that of wiping out all the O'Donnells.

"Well," Capone asked, puffing on a big cigar, "how many of them O'Donnells did you get?"

McGurn explained that Spike and Walter had leaped out a window, and that only O'Connor was left so he got him.

"O'Connor?" Capone yelled.

"Only O'Connor? You mean you only got one lousy truck driver?" He threw his cigar down on the floor and uttered a string of oaths. He then turned to McErlane. "Where the hell were you when them two bastards jumped outta the window?"

"I was watching the front!" McErlane shouted back. "Like McGurn said, McGurn was givin' the orders and I took them. So what the hell do you want from me?"

Capone eyed him through narrowed slits. Charlie Fischetti and Jake Gusick were in the room, and Fischetti, cousin of Al's, said, "Don't blame him, Al. He couldn't chase those two guys. He had to stay right there in the front to protect Jack or in case there were others of the mob there who might run out the front."

Capone saw the logic in this, and McErlane, a little surprised at Fischetti's intervention in his behalf but not grateful, said, "Yeah, that's right. What did you want me to do, leave Jack?"

"Frank," Cappone said tersely, "you'd leave your own mother. But we'll drop it. I got other plans for them guys."

As he finished speaking the telephone rang and he picked it up. On the other end was George Moran. Moran was spitting fire.

"You agreed to stay out of everybody's territory when we had that peace meeting and cut up the city. You been muscling in, Capone. I

just got a call from Spike. He told me McGurn killed O'Connor."

"He's a dirty liar. McGurn was right here in the room with me since two o'clock this afternoon. He ain't left this room."

"That's a lotta bushwah, Capone, and you know it. You're out to take over every Irishman's territory in town. Well, I'm telling you something. If you want peace I want you to hand over McGurn. Send him over here on an errand and my boys will take care of him."

Capone swore. "Moran, I wouldn't hand over a sick dog to you. You're bugs. Got me? You're bugs!" He slammed down the receiver. He turned to the men in the room and said, "That lousy bastard wanted me to hand over McGurn. He's bugs."

Capone gave a short laugh. "Bugs, that's what he is."

The name stuck to Moran from that moment on. And from that moment on was born the hatred between the two men which eventually led to the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, the most brutal, harsh, merciless, and pitiless crime in all of gangland's miserable history, an act of immense human arrogance, the absolute in cold fury, a lurid, insane negation of the slightest spark of compassion.

Capone outlined his plan to McGurn and McErlane on getting rid of the O'Donnells, and by it incurred the wrath and ire of another Irishman, Dion O'Bannion,

who led the Near North Side mob and who was a close friend of Moran's.

Capone said, "O'Donnell brings in his beer from Joliet. It is forty miles from Joliet to Chicago. There is a lot of small towns between Joliet and Chi—and a lot of lonely roads." He paused, looked around and through some papers on his desk, found what he wanted.

"I have it here. The roads run through Lemont, The Sag, Willow Springs, and Summit. The trucks come into Chi by Archer Road. Between Joliet and Summit you guys can stop the trucks. Bring the truck and the beer to our garage on Roosevelt Road. Got it?"

"Sure, Al," McGurn answered.

"How about you, Frank?"

"I got it, I got it."

"Okay. you can start—let me see—yeah, the 17th, day after tomorrow. I got the straight dope."

On that day George Meeghan and Sport Bucher, runners for O'Donnell, set out at midnight from Joliet with two truckloads of beer. The harvest moon was full. Fields of stubble and shocked corn glimmered with frost. The woods, darkly gorgeous in autumn colors, muttered eerily in the cold wind, and the dead leaves rustled along the road. Just to the west, the serrated mud embankments, marking the course of the drainage canal, loomed black against the silver dimness of the sky like a weird mountain range.

When the trucks rumbled through The Sag in its marshy lowlands, the village was asleep, its houses dark, its street silent. A short distance beyond, as the trucks labored slowly up a hill, two men stepped out of the brush with sawed-off shotguns leveled.

"Stop!"

Meeghan brought his truck to a stop. Bucher, driving the other, pulled to a standstill behind him.

"Climb down."

When Meeghan and Bucher got to the ground they were frisked and disarmed, their hands tied behind them, and shoved into the back seat of their captors' car, parked beside the road. Two other men took over the trucks and drove them away. Danny McFall took the wheel of the car, and McErlane and McGurn got in beside him, their sawed-off shotguns trained on the two bound men in the rear seat.

There was dead silence in the car, and dead silence outside of it. Farmhouses flew past, dark shadows in the night, as the car sped along the road. As the street lamps of Willow Springs came into distant view, two shotguns roared, the fire spouting from the barrels lighting up the interior of the car with red brilliancy.

Meeghan and Bucher toppled over, their heads almost torn from their shoulders. While the car was traveling at high speed, McErlane climbed over the front seat and pushed the bodies out the door.

They bounced and tumbled in ghastly, grotesque somersaults along the highway and came to rest in a ditch half filled with water.

Capone greeted McGurn and McErlane with a broad smile. "A couple more of these and that Mick will give up. If he doesn't, we'll finish him."

IT WASN'T to be that simple, because Moran enlisted the aid of Dion O'Bannion in an effort to stop Capone's attacks on the Irish mobs.

O'Bannion, chauvinistic to his toes, had more than once expressed his contempt for "that heathen dago Capone" and while he had agreed along with Moran and the O'Donnells to the territorial boundaries set up for each gang in the peace meeting, he never trusted Capone.

"Capone will cross the line," O'Bannion prophesied. "Any man who will live off the earnings of women is no good and his word is no good." He referred to the Capone gang's string of brothels from which millions of dollars were realized yearly.

Dion O'Bannion had been a choir boy in Holy Name Cathedral. Handsome, blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked, as plump as a dumpling, he looked like a veritable cherub as he sang in his white linen surplice and black cassock.

A devout child, if ever there was one. Good in his catechism, punctual every morning at early mass,

crossing himself with fingertips dipped in holy water and kneeling reverently at his prayers, he won the admiration of Father O'Brien as well as the kindly church people, who held him in warm affection and were sure that this little fellow of such genuine and absorbing piety would some day consecrate his life to the priesthood. But it wasn't to be.

O'Bannion grew up in poverty in Little Hell, on the North Side. This was tough country, on the borders of the Italian colony which centered about Death Corners, where more than a hundred and sixty men had been slain, and where the neighboring houses were pock-marked with bullet holes.

At an early age he hawked papers in the Loop and mixed with the tough kids who were later to be absorbed into the old Market Street gang, notorious for its marauding exploits in the Orleans Street district and along the north branch of the river.

O'Bannion grew into this crew of young thieves by a sort of natural evolution. He was hot-tempered, a young man with powerful shoulders and arms and often engaged in knock-down and drag-out fights with other tough hoodlums. He soon became a practiced hand at holdups, burglary, and safe-blowing, a thoroughgoing thief and hoodlum, dangerous and vicious.

He did nine months in the Bridewell, the Chicago House of Cor-

rection, for burglary, and three months in the same joint for a murderous assault. He was indicted with Hymie Weiss for burglary, and with Schemer Drucci for assault to kill, but both cases were nolle prossed.

With prohibition a law, O'Bannion moved in with a vengeance. Along with Hymie Weiss, Schemer Drucci, Maxie Eisen, and Frank Gusenberg, he launched out as a freelance hijacker. Trucks of all the gangs—Capone, Torrio, Saltis, and even the O'Donnells—fell to him and his gang. He operated without scruple, sailing under a piratical black flag and counted no one's cargoes as immune. That was Dion O'Bannion.

O'Bannion, Capone, and McGurn had one thing in common, a taste for the finer things in life, and once all three came into important money they exhibited this taste in clothes as well as living habits. Capone married an American girl of Irish blood, a well-mannered gentlewoman who was shielded from all contact with the men in his gang. They had a son upon whom Capone lavished affection little short of idolatry.

O'Bannion married Miss Viola Kaniff, a personable and well educated young woman, and established a residence on Pine Grove Avenue, a home done by interior decorators, each room in its individual color.

McGurn lived in a luxuriously

appointed apartment, dressed smartly, played golf in the low seventies, and took a mistress named Louise Rolfe, a beauteous young blonde. They made a handsome couple.

This is the enigma. Each was a violent, harsh, conscienceless killer and yet each, in his own way, possessed virtues uncommon to the popular image of the gangster as depicted by actors like Edward G. Robinson, Humphrey Bogart, Jimmy Cagney, John Garfield, and most recently by Jason Robards.

O'Bannion and Capone were generous beyond conception. No one who needed help, gentle or Jew, ever came away without it. They sent baskets of food to the needy, coal in winter, paid medical expenses, and during the depression Capone set up soup kitchens all over Chicago to feed the hungry. He passed out "leaves"—hundred-dollar bills as if they were going out of style. O'Bannion did the same.

Capone succeeded in wiping out the O'Donnells and took over the entire South Side, and when the last O'Donnell was gone Al received a telephone call from O'Bannion.

"Capone," O'Bannion said, "you are a dirty heathen bastard. You broke the peace treaty. You killed all those poor O'Donnells. No, not you but that other dirty heathen McGurn. And why the good Lord don't strike him dead

for taking a good Irish name through the mud is beyond me. Now, let me tell you one thing—"

Capone broke in with a derisive laugh. "No, let *me* tell you one thing. Where the hell do you get off telling anybody anything about breaking the peace, you lousy double-crossing shanty rat? You crossed Torrio on that Sieben Brewery deal. You crossed Moran when you muscled in on part of his territory. You knocked off Johnny Duffy, an Irishman, who came to you for help and believed you to be his friend.

"And you shot Dave Miller because you believed that lousy stool-pigeon Yankee Schwartz. Now you and Moran are thick as blood-brothers. That's a real joke. Stay in line, O'Bannion, and stay out of my hair, now and always. Got it?"

"Capone," O'Bannion shouted, his tone furious with anger, "this town ain't big enough for both of us. Not any more. One of us is leaving."

"That's right, you lousy Mick. So long!"

Capone wasted no time in backing up his words or in taking up the challenge O'Bannion threw at him. He called McGurn into his suite.

"Jack, I want that lousy Mick O'Bannion. Soon as possible. Set it up. Let me know who you want with you."

"Sure, Al. Soon as possible." Charlie Fischetti and Frank Nit-

ti were against the killing of O'Bannion.

"Big trouble, Al," Fischetti said, "If O'Bannion goes you're gonna have Hymie Weiss and Schemer Drucci on your hands. That crazy Polack Weiss will walk right into this hotel and try to take you. So will Drucci. What do we need this kind of trouble for? Let's have a meeting and see if we can iron out this thing."

Capone waved a negative hand. "No good, Charlie. No good. That Mick asked for it. He declared himself. It's me or him."

"Let's try for the meeting," Fischetti insisted, eager to avoid killings because he was sure that sooner or later public wrath would destroy them all if the murders continued. Al was adamant.

"I'm taking him out, Charlie. That's it."

"I agree with Charlie," Nitti declared. "Think it over, Al. This is certain to develop into dozens of killings on both sides. What do we need it for?"

Capone exploded. "Damn it, don't you guys understand? That skunk asked for it. He made up the game. I have to play it his way or get out. What do you want me to do, wait for him to come and get me?"

And that was exactly what O'Bannion set out to do. He sent Hymie Weiss, Schemer Drucci, Frank and Pete Gusenberg, and Louie "Three-Gun" Alterie into

Capone territory to raid the breweries and hijack the trucks. The group did a good job. They broke up two breweries, hijacked six trucks, and killed seven men, three of them innocent workers in the breweries.

Capone seethed. He called in McGurn again.

"What's holding you up? How come you haven't set this deal up like I told you? I want that lousy Mick dead! Dead! You understand?"

"It's set up," McGurn replied coolly. "For Monday morning. In his flower shop."

O'Bannion had bought a half interest in W. F. Schofield's flower shop on North State near Superior Street, across from the Holy Name Cathedral where he once had been a choir boy. This turned out to be a good business proposition because as gangland's official florist he had built up an immensely profitable trade.

Fate took a hand in helping McGurn shape his planning for the execution of O'Bannion. Mike Merlo, head of the *Unione Siciliana*, died on Saturday, and preparations were made for an imposing funeral. Orders for flowers poured into O'Bannion's shop and he and Schofield were kept busy all day Saturday and Sunday preparing the tributes, some costing as much as five thousand dollars.

Sunday night a telephone message came to the flower shop. Scho-

field took the call. The man at the other end of the wire said he wanted a floral offering, a wreath, perhaps. "Something nice. For Mr. Merlo's funeral. I will pick it up tomorrow—about noon? Will that be all right?"

"Yes, of course," Schofield replied. "May I have your name?"

"Samuel Altagracia."

"Thank you, Mr. Altagracia. The wreath will be ready."

The next day O'Bannion rose early, for there was a great deal of work to be done. He had breakfast, kissed Viola, and gave her a thousand dollars. "Wire this to Ruth, Honey. I won't have time today." He referred to his sister, Mrs. Ruth Stewart of Coldwater, Kansas.

He worked steadily in the shop along with his three helpers, Vincent Galvin, Dave Loftus, and Victor Young. A porter, William Crutchfield, was busy mopping the floor in the front of the shop. At 11:30 he thought of the order for the wreath for Sam Altagracia—Samuel Altagracia. He wondered about it and said the name aloud. "Altagracia." It certainly wasn't Italian. Well, you couldn't tell about them dagos. They had funny names.

The flower shop was about sixty feet deep and some forty feet wide. The soberly tinted walls were half hidden by a jungle of palms, ferns, and blooming plants, and the air, warm and moist like that of a hot-house, was surcharged with the



AL CAPONE

heavy odor of flowers of all kinds. At the rear a glass show case with a frame of stained walnut extended from floor to ceiling and was filled with gorgeous masses of roses.

At the side of the case, in a narrow passageway leading to the back room, a swing gate and the street entrance in an opposite corner, a long strip of rug stretched diagonally across the floor.

Seen through the plate-glass windows at the front, State Street was thronged with laughing, whooping boys and girls out of a parochial school for their midday recess. Every few minutes street cars went rumbling past. Across the thoroughfare the massive gray

structure of Holy Name Cathedral towered in the sunshine.

Promptly at noon the front door opened. Crutchfield looked up as three men entered. One was tall and well dressed. The other two on either side of him were not so tall but were equally well dressed. O'Bannion stepped briskly from the rear room.

"Hello, boys," he said cheerily. "You have come for your wreath for Mr. Merlo?" He extended his hand in cordial greeting. As Crutchfield, his mopping done, passed through the open swing gate into the back room, he saw, out of the tail of his eye, the middle man of the trio smile and grasp O'Bannion's hand. That was all he saw.

When the man on the right drew his gun a sickness came over O'Bannion's face. It was a look of utter disbelief, and then over it spread a brief expression of misery and futility, and over that an unspoken denunciation uttered with his eyes. And then the immense, the powerful, the tempestuous and timeless moment when death can wait no longer arrived, and it was an instant that was mad and unreal for O'Bannion. He tried to pull back his hand but it was held fast.

The shots came then, one after another, like the dark lamentations of grief, of an inflexible bitterness, filled with a quivering terror and an irrevocable finality. The first shot struck O'Bannion in the lar-

ynx. His body recoiled sharply from the shock and a gush of blood poured hotly from the wound and out of his mouth, and still there remained on his face that look of disbelief that it was really happening to him.

The next shot struck him in the throat, a ruthless, merciless wounding, and his body shook with the first stages of the death struggle, the blood flowing over him, splashing over his face, painting him with its hideous dark hue. His features twisted under the coat of blood with an unknown pain and then life began slipping from him and all that was harsh, agonizing, all that had been cruelty, hatred, raging in its warped and scarred tyranny, was choked off and had no more meaning for him.

Two more shots struck him, one in each cheek, and his face wasn't a face any more but a mass of twisted, red-stained flesh, and two more shots struck him in the chest and he was dead, standing and quivering and dead, and then he fell sideways and backwards and knocked over, as he fell, bowls and vases filled with flowers—roses, lilies, carnations, and daffodils, and his blood stained them with a forever mark, a mark given to a brother Cain and to a friend named Judas.

The porter didn't come out from the haven of his terrified world, and when the first shot rang out Calvin, Loftus, and Young fled to

the street. So the deed was done and over—but not really over—because a killing, any killing, is not the end but the beginning.

HYMIE WEISS, who had been as close to O'Bannion as any man can get to another, went berserk with grief. He swore he would kill every murdering rat in Capone's gang, but McGurn first!

"McGurn!" he screamed wildly. "I'll cut him to pieces!"

He almost made good his threat. Together with Drucci, Frank and Pete Gusenberg, Louie Alterie, and Bugs Moran, he set out to find McGurn. His grief over O'Bannion's death never subsided and he translated it into a naked, immense and blazing vengeance, and from that vengeance came an answering of an overwhelming tide of raging tumults, the retaliations by Capone, the ceaseless and highly concentrated conflict to gain the tremendous spoils of this vast criminal enterprise wrapped up in a city's desire for the products of illegal booze and beer, access to whore houses and bookie joints.

This then was the next phase, the web and pattern, the design of the chilled and frozen trackless paths that ran across the wild underworld jungle, the shifting, deepening change which had to come sooner or later in a division of men who never had been united, who never could be united, who were at war when they promised each other

peace and intended war and when they promised to each other an alliance against it. The hatred, violences, deaths thus had to come, and they came, sweeping over the city with a storm-like wave.

Hymie Weiss caught up with Tony Curingione, Capone's regular chauffeur, shot him three times in the head, weighted his body with stones and threw it into a cistern on an abandoned farm in the Forest Preserve near Palos Park. His body indicated that he had first been tortured and burned with matches or cigar butts.

"They call me heartless, eh?" Capone said. "Tony was tortured because he wouldn't talk. He didn't know anything to talk about and the guys who got him knew it." He turned to Jack McGurn and snarled, "Get 'em, Jack. Hymie Weiss first. Cut him to pieces."

Hymie Weiss wasn't to be stopped so easily, however. He was as murderous as Capone or McGurn, and equally heartless. Moreover, he was pursuing a vendetta, Italian style with Polish sauce. He took his attack straight into Cicero, to the heart of the Syndicate's biggest territory, to the Hawthorne Hotel, which was the nerve center for the operations in the suburbs.

It was shortly after noon. The day was warm and filled with the enchanted light and warmth of a persistent summer sun. There was a kind of gayety in the air, a drone

of lighthearted and happy voices, the voices of thousands of men and women who strolled the area around Twenty-second Street in the vicinity of the area surrounding the Western Electric Plant, most of them employees out on their lunch hour.

They walked in pairs, and in threes and fours, chatting idly, the farthest thing from their minds being the incident that was to take place in the next minute.

Not one person in all the several thousand who were on the street that day would have believed such a thing could take place had they been told of it in advance. It was absolutely beyond belief. The mind of the average man in the street would not, could not accept such a fantastic possibility. They had grown accustomed to the wild, unpredictable doings of the hoods and gangsters of the city, but not this. This was a little too much.

And so the thousands of men and women walked the street in the vicinity of the Hawthorne Hotel basking in the summer warmth, their thoughts not even remotely associated with the violence that was about to break open.

And then it happened. A cavalcade of cars, about fifteen in number, traveling in single file, about twenty feet apart, came into view from the west. The stream of cars looked like a funeral procession except that there was no hearse. Hundreds of the strollers looked at

the cars curiously. As the first car came abreast of the Hawthorne Hotel all hell broke loose. There was a volley of machinegun fire, pistol and shotgun fire, fusillade after fusillade, each car a minor attacking force.

The crowd stampeded. Men yelled and women screamed. They ran for shelters. Some of them fell to the ground. Window glass exploded and rattled into ruin. Wood-work became no more than kindling wood. Plaster crumbled from the walls of the Hawthorne Hotel. A hood with a machinegun leaped from a car, kneeled in front of the entrance to the hotel and sent a stream of lead into the lobby.

And then another hood leaped from a car and he, too, knelt and aimed a volley of machinegun fire into the lobby. The furniture was demolished. The counter fronting the office was wrecked. The yelling and screaming was as loud as the sounds of gunfire. It was all over in a matter of minutes, but it was very likely the most outrageous and spectacular few minutes in gangland history.

Again the miracle worked for Capone and McGurn, who were eating in the restaurant and who dropped to the floor at the first sound of gunfire. Louie "Blackie" Burke, one of Capone's men, was shot in the shoulder as he stood in the lobby. A woman named Mrs. Clyde Freeman, sitting in an auto with her husband and baby son,

was almost blinded and killed when a bullet creased her forehead.

A machinegun slug just barely touched her baby's scalp, and three other slugs tore through her husband's clothes but caused no wounds. The Freeman car had been hit by some fifty slugs, and about forty other cars in the block also had suffered damage of one degree or another.

Capone and McGurn recognized Weiss, Drucci, Bugs Moran, and Frank and Pete Gusenberg among those who had been in the attack. Capone marked them all down in his mind for future attention.

"Moran, that lousy bastard," Capone swore. "He's tied in with Weiss. But Weiss is our man, Jack."

McGurn nodded.

On October 1, a short few months after the attack on the Hawthorn Hotel, McGurn got his chance to avenge the atrocity, as Charlie Fischetti termed it.

A week previously a young man who gave his name as Oscar Langdon applied to Mrs. Rotariu for a room. He insisted on a front room, but as all the front rooms were occupied he rented a small hall bedroom with the understanding he was to be given a front room as soon as one was vacant. The occupants of the front room on the third floor moved out October 8th and Langdon moved in. He was careful to tell Mrs. Rotariu that he worked nights and slept days and

asked especially that he never be disturbed.

Then of a sudden Oscar Langdon disappeared and was never heard of again. Two men, who had come ostensibly to visit him, had taken possession of his room. One of these men, according to Mrs. Rotariu, was about thirty-five years old and wore a gray top coat and gray fedora. The other was younger, with dark clothes and a light cap.

On the same day that Langdon applied for a room at Mrs. Rotariu's, a young woman who gave her name as Mrs. Theodore Schultz of Mitchell, South Dakota, and was described as blonde, pretty, and well dressed, rented a front room on the third floor of an apartment house at number 1 Superior Street, on the south side of that thoroughfare, fifty feet or so west of State Street.

She paid two months' rent in advance, and having played her part in the drama, evaporated like Oscar Langdon into thin air, leaving the room occupied by two men whose presence in the building was not even suspected. The two rooms at 740 State and Number 1 Superior, rented as machine-gun nests, commanded the approaches to the flower shop and to Weiss' office above it.

From the State Street room, which was directly opposite Holy Name Cathedral, all the other side of State Street and a part of Su-

perior Street along the south side of the church were in view. But the window of the room was so close to the north wall of the flower shop that only a slight angle of the sidewalk in front of the shop could be seen, and the front door was hidden from sight. But the room at Superior Street overlooked almost the entire stretch of sidewalk in front of the shop as well as the alley in its rear.

Two men in each of the rooms never left their posts. They sat all day by the windows, smoking cigarettes, their machineguns in their laps, waiting patiently, like jungle beasts watching a trail.

Weiss had been tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. His executioners were ready. No more chance for life was left to him than to the condemned murderer who stands on the trapdoor of a gallows or is seated in the electric chair.

Weiss' car drew up to the north curb of Superior Street at the side of Holy Name Cathedral at four o'clock in the afternoon of October 11, 1926.

Five men stepped out on the sidewalk to go to Weiss' office. They were Weiss, Pat Murray, his bodyguard, Sam Peller, his driver, W. W. O'Brien; an attorney, and Ben Jacobs, an investigator in O'Brien's employ.

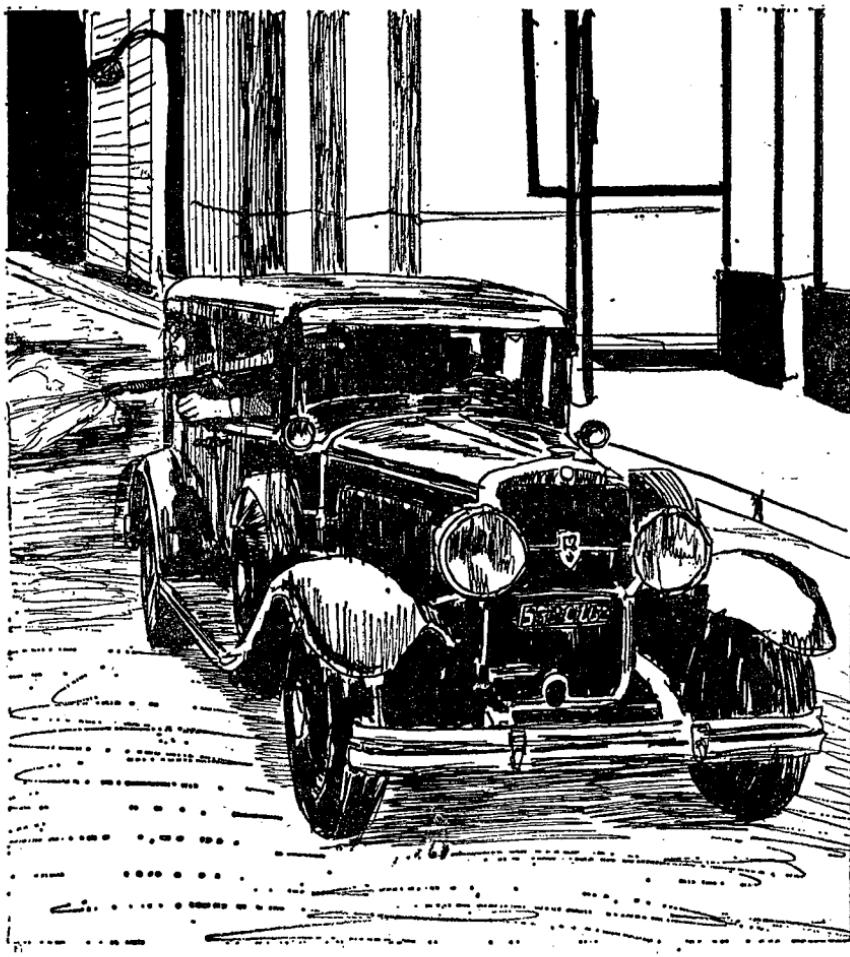
They had come from the Criminal Court Building, where, with O'Brien as the defense attorney, the trial of Joe Saltis and Lefty

Koncil for the murder of Mitters Foley was in progress. Slightly in advance of the others, O'Brien sauntered to the State Street curb. Slightly in the rear, Peller lingered to lock the door of the car. The other three walked leisurely in a straggling group.

A little girl with ruddy cheeks and tossing curls, trundling her hoop merrily in front of Holy Name Cathedral, stopped in terrified amazement. Her hoop rolled into the gutter, and she stood with her finger in her mouth, staring wide-eyed at the window of the third-floor room across the street. The window of the dingy lodging house was suddenly ablaze with blinding splashes and streams of fire.

The swarthy faces of two men with machineguns were illuminated as by a dazzling explosion of fireworks. The drowsy stillness of the street, bathed in dusky coolness by the long shadows of the later afternoon, was broken by a throbbing ear-splitting clatter, and bullets, sizzling through the air with a noise like the swish of wind-driven hail, were splintering stone fragments from the corner of the cathedral and cutting slits in the smooth cement slabs of the sidewalk.

Weiss had taken no more than a dozen steps when he was killed instantly by ten machinegun slugs, six of which passed through him. He stumbled forward and sprawled on his face.



Pat Murray was riddled by fifteen slugs and tumbled lifeless beside Weiss.

W. W. O'Brien, struck in the arm, side, and abdomen, collapsed in his tracks. Peller, shot in the groin, and Jacobs in the leg, darted south across Superior Street out of

range of the guns and fell in the entrance of a building a block away.

The little girl, who had lost her hoop, still stood with her finger in her mouth, gazing in fixed fascination at the window. Two men were dead and three wounded, but it was

all over so quickly she had not had time to run.

A great crowd gathered. Weiss and Murray were carried into the flower shop. O'Brien was taken to a near-by doctor's office and was then removed to a hospital, where he eventually recovered. Peller and Jacobs were not seriously wounded.

The killers ran down the back stairs of the rooming house and climbed through a window into the alley. They crossed Superior Street without being noticed, and hurrying on south through the alley, turned west in a side alley and vanished in Dearborn Street. Their machine-guns, found on top of a dog house in the rear of 12 West Huron Street, where they had tossed them, furnished the only clue to the course of their flight.

For more than a week after the killings nothing was known of the second machinegun nest at Superior Street, from which no shots had been fired. Then Mrs. Anna Fischer, living on the second floor, noticed a damp splotch on her ceiling.

"There must be a radiator or an ice box leaking in the room over me," Mrs. Fischer complained to the janitor.

The janitor investigated. He found no leak, but to his astonishment he found a loaded automatic shotgun on the bed, two empty wine bottles, and around two chairs standing by the front window a ring of a hundred or more cigarette

butts, evidence that the murderous vigil here had been of the same duration as that in the State Street room.

No one had seen the two gunmen leave. They had come, kept their watch for two days or more, and departed without being observed by anyone in the building. It was thought they had waited until dark and then quietly slipped away.

The bullet-scarred corner stone of Holy Name Cathedral remains to this day as vivid a memorial of the killings as if it were stained with blood. The stone originally bore in a carved letters this passage from the Vulgate version of St. Paul's Epistle to the Phillipians: "A. D. 1874—IN THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH." The bullets chipped out all the words but these: "EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW . . . HEAVEN AND ON EARTH." The half obliterated inscription is still as it was left by the hail of lead from the machine-guns of the murderers.

IF HE DIDN'T know it before, Bugs Moran now knew that a force was alive in the city that was savage and fierce, that could burn, maim, kill in a way that he never thought possible, and that it was directed by a man who created his own kind of viciousness, a kind that pierced the heart with its cold, nameless fear and sorrow.

Hymie Weiss had killed. Hymie had led a cavalcade of cars into Cicero and fired a thousand bullets at a hotel. Al Capone sent his men into the house where you lived, directed his guns at your heart and fired. That was the difference that counted.

Hymie Weiss had been second-rate at his trade. When he learned the difference it was too late, because all he had was a fleeting instant of time in which to realize it before the hard slugs scorched him, tore him, and shattered him completely.

Bugs Moran now took over the gang and attempted to reorganize it into a semblance of functional order, but Bugs lacked the ability of a Weiss or an O'Bannion and he stumbled along erratically.

He knew, however, that he had to avenge the killing of Weiss or lose face with the gang and so he set out on a program of retaliation which in time was to spell his downfall.

Capone figured that Moran would try to do exactly what he did. Let there be no mistake about Capone's intelligence. He was as cunning as a fox on the hunt. He told Frank Nitti and Charlie Fischetti, "That bug Moran is going to try to prove he's tough and smart and we're gonna have some trouble with him."

"Yeah, I know," Fischetti answered. "I told you that. And I told you there would be a lot of heat if

we went after O'Bannion. Well, we've got it."

Capone waved a deprecatory hand. "It means nothing. I got the word from the boys downtown. Things will die down in a few days. It always does."

"Maybe it will," Fischetti said, "but there's gonna be some more heat when that Mick tries to prove himself and we try to stop him."

"Try to stop him, Charlie? I am going to stop him if he gets out of line."

Without consulting Fischetti, Nitti, or his other chief lieutenants, Capone told McGurn to go after Moran men. "Pick 'em off, Jack. Anytime you see one, pick him off."

McGurn knocked off Pete Rizzo and threw his body out of a car at the corner of Oak and Milton Streets in Little Hell, right in the heart of Moran's territory. He then killed Tony Aiello, Charlie Delo, Tony Califiore, and Salvatore Cannelli, and each time he did it with his deadly machinegun, almost cutting his victims in half.

He wasn't satisfied merely to kill them. He had to mutilate them, emptying as many as twenty, thirty, or forty slugs into their bodies, even after they had fallen and were obviously dead.

Moran then got in a retaliatory strike, something he was to regret for all the days of his life. On March 8, 1928, Pete and Frank Gusenberg caught up with Jack Mc-

Gurn in the Smoke Shop of the McCormick Hotel on Rush Street.

McGurn had gone into the shop to make a telephone call, and while he was in the booth the two Gusenbergs rushed in armed with machineguns. They sprayed the booth and ran out.

That was their mistake. They should have made sure of McGurn's death. He was hit in the shoulder, chest, and arm, and he recovered.

From that moment on McGurn lived for only one thing—to get the Gusenbergs and Bugs Moran. He rantred and raved all during the time he was in the hospital about wiping out the entire Moran gang. He told everyone from the mob who visited him that he wanted the gang wiped out.

"Take it easy, Jack," Capone said to him. "You're not going to try to kill twenty-five men." He laughed then. "Not all at once, anyway."

"Yes, I am. Every damned one of them. All at once."

Capone shrugged. "Well, there's time. We can talk about it after you come out of here."

"There's nothing to talk about, Al," McGurn insisted. "I want you on my side in this. I want your okay."

After he recovered, McGurn once more went on forays into Moran territory, determined more than ever to kill any Moran hood he found. He caught Dominic Cinderella and that was all for Domi-

nic. Some time later he stitched a pattern into the bodies of Joe Salmone and Bowlegs Oliveri, and then on successive days he burned down Joe Cavaretti and Virgilio Aliotta, all of them Joe Aiello's men who had joined up with Moran.

And still he went on, driven by the terrible hatred of Moran and the Gusenbergs. He discovered Bill Davern on a street corner and cut his head from his body with machinegun slugs. His name became synonymous with death—a violent, brutal, vicious, and merciless death.

During all this time he spent hours arguing with Capone, Charlie Fischetti, and Frank Nitti trying to get consent to wipe out the Moran gang at one time. They finally gave in, although they knew that this might be the final violent act the public would accept from Chicago's gangs. After a great deal of planning, after almost three weeks of watching and waiting, the plan was set.

A room was rented from Mrs. Frank Orvidson, who operated a rooming house at 2051 North Clark Street, and another room was rented at 2039 North Clark Street, both houses being across the street from Moran's garage, the SMC Cartage Company at 2122 North Clark Street. A garage at the rear of 1723 Wood Street was rented from a grocer named Joe Jappert. The garage was for the pur-

pose of storing the Cadillac car to be used in getting to and from the scene of the massacre, and was not to be taken out until the time for the killings came.

It would take only five minutes to drive from 1722 Wood Street to 2122 North Clark Street. The SMC, incidentally, was ideally suited for the killings. A large sign on the bay window fronting Clark Street hid the interior completely from the view of passersby. The door, or entrance, north of the window, also was partially covered with a sign.

The watching and waiting began, and continued day after day. Finally, on the morning of February 14, word came from the watchers in the rooming houses that everything was set. The plot had been worked out in minute detail, with its basis in an arrangement fostered by the Syndicate, through a dealer supplying booze to Moran, to deliver a large cargo to the garage on the morning of February 14.

The deal for a large cargo was made so that it would require most of the gang to be there. The hour set for the delivery was eleven o'clock. It was believed that Moran and most of his boys would be there. It was a certainty that Moran and the Gusenbergs would be there. That was enough for Jack McGurn.

The fake police car with its star markings pulled up to the garage and stopped in front of the en-

trance. The day was cold but clear. Traffic was light. There were few pedestrians in the street. Two men in fake police uniforms got out of the Cadillac and strode quickly into the garage. They carried machine guns concealed under their coats. There was no one in the office in the forepart of the building so they proceeded into the garage. There were five men sitting at a table playing cards, and a sixth man stood watching.

"All right, stand up," one of the fake policemen ordered. "This is a pinch." The six men stood up. "Up against the wall. Come on. Move! Hands high. All right. Stand there. Just like that."

The other fake policeman then saw a seventh man under a truck. He was Johnny May, a mechanic. "Hey, you, too. Come out from under there. Up against the wall."

Johnny May came out from under the truck and lined up with the others. A huge police dog tied to a wheel of the truck looked on curiously, then whined once. Seven men against the wall which was no more than fifteen feet in length.

First in the row, at the east end, was Dr. Rinehart Schwimmer, an optometrist, a hanger-on who found some sort of thrill out of associating with hoods and gangsters, and then in order, Frank Gusenberg; Pete Gusenberg; Albert Weinstock; Jimmy Clark, Moran's brother-in-law; Adam Hyer; and Johnny May. All ready. All set.

Seven men, shoulder to shoulder, standing faces to the wall, their hands up. They were calm, some of them still smiling, unaware that this wasn't a pinch at all but the end of the line, and that they were to become victims in the most infamous crime in gangland history.

At that moment Jack McGurn came in, his face hard, his eyes burning with hatred and malice, a machinegun in his hands. There were clicks of hammers, the ominous sound which had become so familiar to the Gusebergs. Frank turned slightly and saw the face of McGurn. He let out a yell.

"You dirty sonofabitch!" McGurn screamed at him. "Here's your payoff!"

The machineguns chattered in unison and the noise sounded like a roll of drums. The dim corner lit up like an inferno. The slugs kept coming, sweeping across the row of men, and all seven seemed to fall as one, in crazy, twisted heaps, blood pouring out of them, running over the floor of them, running over the floor of the garage like water out of a hose. The wall of the garage was a bright red, and over the red was splattered chunks of human flesh.

There were no screams, no cries for mercy, nor did any of them move when they fell. All were dead except Frank Guseberg, a miraculous spark of life still beating in him. This was the damnable justice of gangland's most fearsome

killer, a suave, dapper, handsome demon in human guise named Jack McGurn.

The discovery of the six dead men and one dying was swift, and the city shuddered as the news of the massacre filtered through radios and was carried all over the world. It was beyond belief. It just couldn't have happened. But it did.

When the police arrived they took one look at the men on the floor and turned their heads. One of the cops got sick and threw up. The dog tied to the wheel of the truck was howling madly.

Frank Guseberg was rushed to the Alexian Brothers Hospital. There were fourteen machinegun bullets in his body, but the shock of his wounds had robbed him of all pain and shadowed his brain.

Lieutenant Tom Loftus, who had known Frank since boyhood, sat beside the cot on which Frank lay.

"You're dying, Frank," Loftus said. "Your brother's dead. All the rest are dead too. Tell me who did it, Frank."

There was no answer, only a slight movement of the lips. Loftus leaned closer. "Who did it, Frank? Try to talk. Give me a name. One name. Try, Frank."

Again there was only a movement of the lips but no sound. Loftus waited, urging Frank to talk, and finally Guseberg said, "I'm cold. Cover me up."

Loftus rose to pull another blanket over Gusenberg, and as he did so Frank let out a little sigh and died, and with his death ended all positive identification of Jack McGurn.

The aftermath, the investigation, the official statements, the stories of reputed eye-witnesses who declared they had seen the car with the fake police markings, and some of the men in it, had seen them coming and going into the garage introduced a wild jumble of disorder and confusion.

Detectives made a painstaking canvas of the neighborhood. They came upon Mrs. Frank Orvidson. She told them that a well-dressed man had rented a front room at her house at 2051 North Clark Street, that he had never left it, night or day. They came upon Mrs. Doody and she told them she also had rented a front room to two men who seemed to be watching the garage continually. Both women were taken downtown and shown through the mug file. They couldn't make an identification.

Early in the morning of February 22, police were notified by the fire department that an expensive automobile had been burned deliberately in a garage at the rear of 1723 North Wood Street. The detectives who investigated determined that the car, a 1927 model Cadillac, had been hacked with an ax, cut with a saw and an acetyline torch.



"BUGS" MORAN

In a corner of the garage they found a siren, such as police cars used. A German Luger pistol and the wood handles of two more automatic pistols were found in the ruins of the car.

Chief of Detectives Egan said he was certain that this was the car used to transport the massacre killers. The owner of the garage told the detectives that the garage had been rented February 7th to a man named Frank Rogers, who had given his address as 1859 West North Avenue.

Police went there and found a deserted house. The house next door, however, was recognized as the home of Claude Maddox who,

police knew, was a Capone Syndicate man, the owner of the Circus Cafe and leader of the notorious Circus Gang. The name of Claude Maddox brought up the name of Jack McGurn who, it was known, had brought Maddox into the Syndicate. McGurn was picked up.

On the afternoon of February 27, a squad of detectives from the office of State's Attorney Swanson raided a suite in the Stevens Hotel on Michigan Boulevard and found Jack McGurn and Louise Rolfe there.

Lieutenant William Cusack, in charge of the raiding squad, looked the rooms of the suite over closely, examined every item of clothing, each bag, each piece of furniture. The floor of the room was strewn with newspapers whose headlines dealt with the St. Valentine's Day Massacre.

"How long have you been here?" Lt. Cusack asked Louise.

Louise smiled sweetly. "A long time. Since—" She put a finger to her pretty mouth and thought—"since January twenty-eighth."

"Are you married?" Cusack asked.

"Are you proposing?" Louise asked, and sighed on a facetiously ecstatic note.

"Real flip, eh?" Cusack retorted. "Are you and McGurn married?" he snapped.

"Almost," she answered. "Real almost."

Jack had a .45 caliber automatic

in a holster under his arm and a .32 caliber pistol in a back pocket of his trousers. The cops took those. They could find nothing else, so they took both Jack and Louise to the detective bureau, where they were put through a severe grilling by Assistant State Attorneys Ditchburne and Butler.

McGurn denied any and all complicity in the massacre, said he had no reason to hate or even dislike Moran and his men.

"We were friends," he said.

"Like hell!" Butler retorted. "Didn't Frank and Pete Gusenberg shoot you up in the McCormick Hotel Smoke Shop?"

"Why, no," McGurn replied. "Who said that? I never said it. I didn't see the guys who shot me."

"You're a real wise boy, Jack," Ditchburne said. "Well, let me tell you something, wise guy. We got a make on you. Positive identification. How do you like that, wise boy?"

Jack McGurn didn't like it. He was booked on seven charges of murder. Louise was held on a statutory charge. She got the biggest share of attention from investigators, who believed they might get a stray bit of important information from her if they talked to her long enough and often enough. They were doomed to disappointment, and Louise Rolfe became famous as "The Blond Alibi" through her testimony that she and Jack had

been in the Stevens Hotel from January 28 to February 27, when they were arrested, and that they had never left the hotel.

Jack McGurn was held until December and finally released for lack of evidence. There had been an identification by a woman. Since she said she wasn't positive her testimony was worthless. The cops were certain, however, that she was positive but that she feared for her life and changed her story.

So McGurn went on his merry way, a hero among the men in the Syndicate but a fearsome killer to the underworld and to those legitimate people who read of the Massacre or heard it on the radio. The remnants of Moran's mob were determined to get Jack and they waited a long time.

Albert Anselmi and Frank Scalisi, the two other men who wielded machineguns in the Massacre were shot and killed before the year was out.

On a February night in 1936, Louise Rolfe decided she wanted to go out on the town, and Jack told her to go ahead but that he wanted to go bowling. He went to a bowling alley at 805 Milwaukee Avenue, alone and unarmed, secure in the thought that no one in his right mind would want to attack him, not in his own territory. He was wrong. Dead wrong.

Shortly after he started bowling two men came into the bowling alley and headed for McGurn. Jack

turned from the alley where he had just thrown a ball and saw them as they stood before him, guns in hand.

For almost a decade and a half he had lived in a world of stink and violence, with death as his joyous partner. As he stood there facing the two men, he still believed they wouldn't knock him off, not in the bowling alley, under the bright lights, in full view of the people standing in the next alley watching the tableau, and especially in front of that girl who was looking directly at them, her mouth agape as if she were preparing to scream. No, they wouldn't be that bold.

He was like that, sure. He would kill in the mayor's office if he had to. But he was Jack McGurn. Who were these guys? Punks. He had never seen them before. And they were going to knock him off? How silly can you get?

Uncertainty in his voice, Jack asked, "What's up, guys?"

The shorter of the two men said, "You, Jack. You're up." And then he smiled, a cool, careless smile. It was a joke. "McGurn asks, 'What's up, guys?' And he gets his answer. 'You're up, Jack.' All through. This is it."

The slugs hit McGurn, one after another in quick succession, and suddenly he knew that he had been hit harder than he ever had been hit before, harder than when Frank and Pete Gusenberg had hit him. And then he had the strange sensa-

tion of falling and of hearing a woman screaming hysterically. Blood filled his mouth and the lights went out. He twisted on the floor and the blood from his mouth poured down onto his expensive tailor-made shirt, and he coughed harshly and was dead.

Numerology may not be an exact science, but there was a distinct cast to the number *seven* in Jack's life. His real name was Vincent Gebardi, each name containing *seven* letters. He was involved in one of the nation's darkest underworld crimes in which *seven* men were slaughtered. The night he was killed he had exactly *seven* hundred dollars in his pockets, a night almost *seven* years to the day after the Massacre.

The score sheet of his game indicated that he was in the *seventh* frame, and the score in that frame was exactly seventy-seven. Maybe he was a lousy bowler.

Bugs Moran was never the same after the Massacre. He drifted out of Chicago in aimless wanderings, tied up with several other gangsters not of his mob, held up a brewery in Toledo, Ohio, was captured, convicted, and sentenced to ten to twenty-five years in the Ohio State Penitentiary at Columbus. When he was released, the FBI picked him up for an old federal rap, con-

victed him and sent him to Leavenworth, where he died shortly after. He is buried in the prison cemetery, a forgotten figure.

Al Capone was convicted of income tax evasion on October 24, 1931 before Federal Judge James H. Wilkerson in Chicago, who promptly sentenced him to eleven years in prison and fined him fifty thousand dollars. He did hard time, every day of every year, because he wasn't cut out for prison.

In the last year of his sentence he suffered from paresis, a brain disease growing out of advanced syphilis. He served his time and was released, went immediately to his Palm Island home and stayed there. He would sit under a palm tree in a faded bathrobe day after day, smoke a cigar with eyes dimmed by failure of his brain and didn't know he was dying. Toward the end he could remember nothing. He died in January 1947, and was buried in Chicago.

The seven men who died in that bloody Massacre on February 14, 1929, carried the vengeance of their murders from the grave, an outraged and roused public forging the retaliation against the gang of murdering mobsters who fashioned their miserable destinies by bloody violence. It couldn't end any other way.

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January—1968

ONE AFTERNOON in the early fall of last year I stopped at Autumn Street to pay a visit to my investigator friend, Lucius Leffing. In spite of the crisp weather, I found him lethargic and listless.

Sprawled comfortably enough in his favorite Morris chair, surrounded by cherished Victorian antiques, he recited his woes.

Leffing shrugged moodily. "I am not sure of it. The human brain is at best an inexact and unpredictable instrument."

The doorbell rang and he arose reluctantly. "If this is one more gadget salesman, I vow there will be a homicide right here on Autumn Street!"

I heard a brief conversation and

The Enemy Unknown

*Madman . . . killer . . . what creature of evil was
this, the unseen Thing which prowled the night
hunting down his doomed human prey?*

by JOSEPH PAYNE BRENNAN

"What is the use?" he asked. "A private investigator today is already an anachronism. We are being replaced, not merely by chemists and forensic specialists, but by the electronic brains of high-speed computers. Automation will end us all I am sure of it!"

I sipped the sarsaparilla which my host had provided. "Nonsense! Computers are all very well in their place, but they can never replace the human brain!"

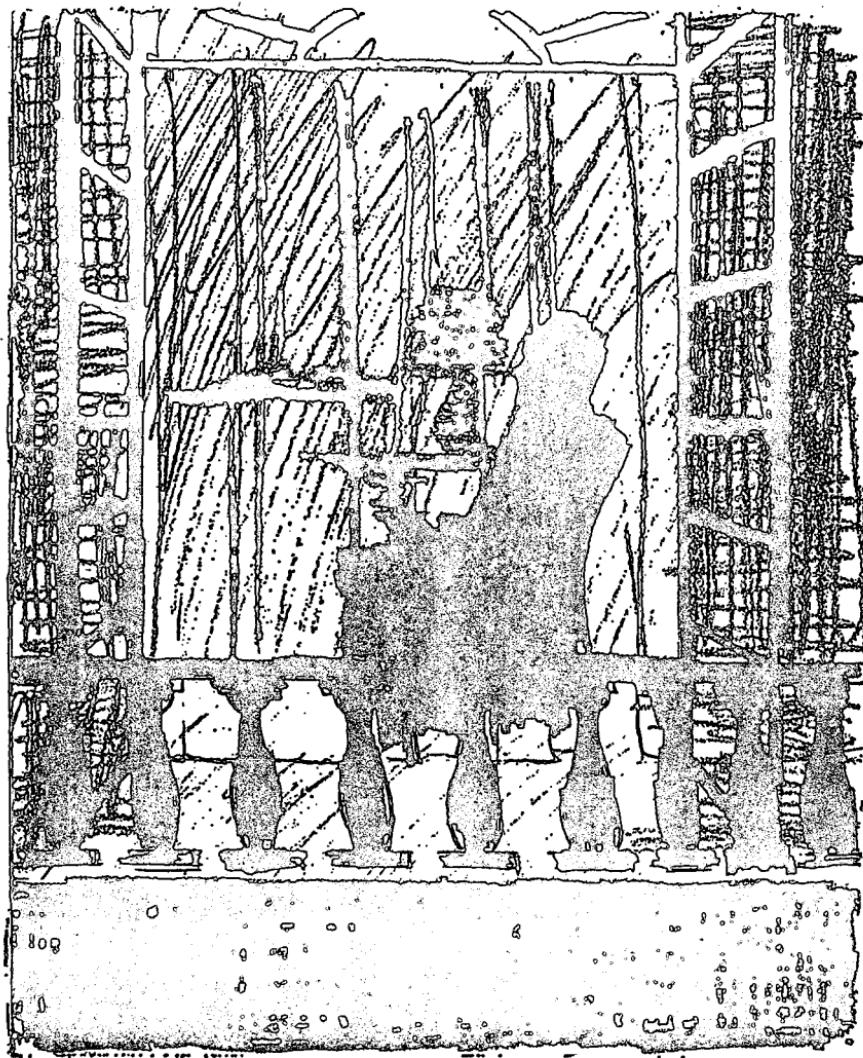
then Leffing ushered into the living room a gentleman whom he introduced to me as Mr. Roland Spanleigh.

Mr. Spanleigh, a brisk person of fifty-odd with a ramrod military bearing, gave me a brief but uncomfortably firm handshake and seated himself, setting a briefcase at his feet.

Leffing resumed his Morris chair. "Mr. Brennan has been my assistant and confidant for some years.

Featuring

LUCIUS LEFFING



Please understand that you may speak freely."

Spanleigh nodded. "Very good. Perhaps two are better than one in any case. I have not gone to the police for, I think, obvious reasons—red tape, publicity, and so on."

"The police hereabouts are reasonably efficient but, I fear, a bit heavy-handed," Leffing observed. "Kindly start at the beginning, Mr. Spanleigh."

"Well, I live on a country place up near Wallingford. Twelve acres, more or less. I suppose you'd say I putter around. I'm a bachelor and I was lucky enough to inherit a sum which permits me to do as I please—within certain limitations, of course. I'm working on a book about my hunting adventures. I take care of my own investment portfolio, and I have a few hobbies, coin collecting, mineral specimens and so on. I am moderately social, but not outstandingly so."

Spanleigh chuckled. "As I advance in years, I find that a good book and a few glasses of fine port pass the evening very pleasantly!"

"Indeed!" Leffing agreed. "Pray, continue."

"Well, about two months ago I received in the day's mail an ace of spades enclosed in a plain white envelope. I thought little of it. It looked to me like a juvenile bit of mischief. On a few occasions I have warned some town boys away from my fruit trees. I put it down to that. But the very next week I

received another, and then, the following week, I received this."

He withdrew several envelopes from his jacket pocket and handed one to Leffing.

As my friend unfolded the enclosed paper, I looked over his shoulder. A rather arresting charcoal sketch reproduction, obviously clipped from a magazine or book, showed a tiger, fangs bared, advancing at night through dense jungle scrub. We were still studying it when Mr. Spanleigh handed over another envelope.

"And then a week after I received this," he said.

The second enclosure was an original executed in black ink on heavy white paper. This sketch showed a black skeletal figure crossing an oddly contrasting white bridge. Again it was night. The drawing was not without flaws but it did indicate a certain talent.

"And the playing cards, Mr. Spanleigh?" Leffing inquired.

Our guest handed over two more envelopes and Leffing shook out two identical aces of spades. They were glossy and unmarked, the kind of cards that might be taken from decks found in any five-and-dime store.

Leffing slipped the cards back into their envelopes and studied the postmarks. "All mailed in Wallingford during the afternoon." He looked up. "Anything else, Mr. Spanleigh?"

For the first time I noticed a

rather grim look take shape on Roland Spanleigh's face. "Yes," he said.

Reaching into his briefcase, he withdrew a metal-tipped red arrow, feathered and deadly-looking. "When I arrived home rather late one evening last week, I found this embedded in the front door."

Leffing examined the arrow with care. "An ordinary target arrow," he commented. "The shaft appears to have been painted red quite recently."

"Is there an archery range anywhere in your area?" I asked Mr. Spanleigh.

He shook his head. "None that I know of. Certainly none so close that an overshot would strike my front door!"

"You mentioned hunting adventures," Leffing said. "Did you ever hunt with the bow and arrow?"

Again Spanleigh shook his head. "We used big-game rifles exclusively. I never pulled a bowstring in my life."

Leffing laid the arrow on an adjacent table. "It appears to be a rather singular case," he remarked. "Tell me, Mr. Spanleigh, have you any enemies that you are aware of?"

Spanleigh spread his hands. "That's the strangest part of it. So far as I know, I haven't an enemy in the world!"

"Where and when was your big-game hunting conducted?"

"In the Belgian Congo and in

the terai of Nepal, during the early fifties."

Leffing sat frowning in silence for some time.

"I will admit there are features of this business which puzzle me," he said at length. "However I am reasonably sure that juvenile mischief is not at the bottom of it. I can make no immediate move without further thought. I advise you, meanwhile, Mr. Spanleigh, to remain indoors after dark and to keep away from lighted windows!"

Spanleigh frowned. "You believe my life is in danger, then?"

"I think it may be, Mr. Spanleigh. That is our only safe assumption. If the whole business is merely a hoax on the part of some paranoiac person, a few precautions can do no harm."

Spanleigh nodded and stood up. "I will do as you say, Mr. Leffing, though it will be an infernal nuisance!"

Leffing arose. "One more thing, Mr. Spanleigh. I want you to write me out a brief synopsis of your life—facts, dates, data. If you can interpolate anecdotes and episodes, better still, but do let me have the basic facts as quickly as possible."

"I'm afraid you'll find it a pretty tame autobiography!" Mr. Spanleigh replied, "but I'll get down some information for you."

Leffing escorted him toward the entrance hall. "Omit nothing pertinent, Mr. Spanleigh!"

After he had seen our client to the door, Leffing returned and sat down. "Well, Brennan, what do you make of it?"

"It is my opinion that Mr. Spanleigh made a mortal enemy on one of his hunting expeditions. Africa, Nepal, you know. Almost anything can happen in those places. He probably broke some taboo or offended one of the tribal gods and some fanatic has tracked him down to wreak vengeance!"

"If they seek vengeance, why warn him so many times in advance? Why put him on the alert?"

"That's easy," I answered. "One of the chief ingredients of tribal revenge is terror. The victim is often terrorized, virtually left paralyzed with terror for days or months before he is finally finished off. Frequently terror itself kills him. He literally dies of fright!"

Leffing placed his fingers together. "Well, well, you have a point there, Brennan, but I daresay it would take a great deal of terror to finish off Mr. Spanleigh. He strikes me as a person with steady nerves."

"What is your theory, then?" I asked a bit peeishly.

Leffing studied the ceiling. "At the moment I have no theory. I do not theorize until I have assembled all the available facts."

At times Leffing's airy assumption of superiority irked me. I stood up. "Well, let me know when you have assembled them.

If some native deviltry isn't involved in this, I'll still be very much surprised."

When I stopped at seven Autumn Street a few days later, Leffing tossed me a sheaf of papers. "Mr. Spanleigh's autobiography. See what you can make of it."

The thumb-nail autobiography was almost starkly statistical—dates, names, places. Spanleigh had gone to an exclusive boys' school, graduated from Harvard, worked briefly in a brokerage firm on Wall Street, joined some of the better clubs, etc.

When World War II arrived, he had already acquired a Reserve commission. He went overseas with a National Guard division, was promoted to major, won five battle stars, a Bronze Star, etc. He remained in service until several years after the end of the war. Some time later he went big-game hunting in Africa and Nepal.

Finally he returned to New York, moving later to Connecticut, where he eventually bought a country property and "settled down" with his hunting book, his investments and his hobbies. In general outline, it was the sort of life comfortable English gentlemen have been living since Victorian days.

I put the papers down with a sigh. "A pleasant life, but I'm afraid Spanleigh hasn't given you a single clue. The account is singularly devoid of imagination. He



records names, but no personalities. He mentions events, but omits all details concerning them. I'm afraid his hunting book will be a real soporific horror!"

Leffing smiled whimsically. "Not everyone possesses your writing gift, Brennan! Besides, you must remember that the account was hastily done; Mr. Spanleigh lacked time for detailed reminiscences."

I shrugged. "I suppose you are right. Have you got a single lead out of it?"

"There are a few possibilities to be explored. Whether they are leads remains to be seen."

"I still think the Africa-Nepal hunting expeditions are the key to the whole business."

Sitting down in his Morris chair, Leffing stretched out his long legs. "To go over Mr. Spanleigh's hunting grounds in Africa and Nepal would require an expedition on our part. It is not feasible."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "we can wait until his book comes out. If we can finish it without falling asleep, we may find a clue."

My attempt at facetiousness only irritated Leffing. "Come, come, this is serious business! Mr. Spanleigh's life may be in danger!"

"Has he received any further warnings?"

"Nothing more so far."

I remained a while longer, but Leffing's conversation became desultory. Sensing that he wanted to be left alone to concentrate on the Spanleigh affair, I soon departed. I wondered how many glasses of sarsaparilla he would drink.

When I stopped in two days later, he was in a state of agitation. The previous night a red arrow had crashed through Spanleigh's drawingroom window. He had been in another room at the time, but Leffing was by now thoroughly alarmed.

He paced the floor restlessly. "Someone is toying with Spanleigh; tormenting him, someone who bears him deadly hatred. But there may be no further warnings. Any night, any moment, Spanleigh's enemy may strike to kill!"

"You have made no progress with the case?"

Leffing shrugged. "I have gathered together some scraps of information and some more may be forthcoming, but the entire lot of it may turn out to be irrelevant." He struck his fist against his palm. "Time! Brennan, time! That is what we are fighting now!"

The affair left me baffled; I could offer no help. I did suggest that

Spanleigh might be withholding some dark but vital information concerning his personal life, but my friend shook his head.

"Mr. Spanleigh is by now filled with acute apprehension. I am convinced he would not knowingly withhold any facts; however unflattering, if he thought they applied to the present situation."

At this point it was in my mind to suggest that Spanleigh had better call in the police, but since such a suggestion would be tantamount to an admission of failure on Leffing's part, I said nothing.

My friend continued to pace the floor. I sat on uneasily for a few minutes and then rose to go.

"If I can be of any help, don't hesitate to call me, day or night," I told Leffing. He nodded, appreciatively I thought, and I left.

One afternoon, nearly a week later, I received a call from Leffing.

"A climax may be approaching," he told me. "We may know tonight! If you wish to come along, I will welcome your presence, but I must warn you that your life may be in danger! If you decide to come, you had better be armed!"

I assured him that nothing could keep me away and that I possessed a .32 German Sauer automatic in good working order.

I arrived at seven Autumn Street just at dusk. Leffing came out almost immediately and min-

utes later we were heading up Whitney Avenue toward the parkway which passes through Wallingford.

"I may be wrong," he told me as we drove along, "but I believe I have detected a pattern in at least one aspect of this business. It is this: both arrows were fired on Wednesday nights and all the warnings were mailed on Wednesday afternoons."

I glanced at him. "And it is now Wednesday again!"

"Exactly!"

He lapsed into silence but I was not willing to let matters rest. "And you have also gathered together other information?"

"I have a theory supported by certain facts I have managed to assemble. However, there is scarcely time for an orderly exposition of them now, and in any case they may turn out to be wholly irrelevant and best left unrecited."

I knew better than to press him. I felt, moreover, that he was probably going over the evening's forthcoming business, whatever it was, in his own mind and would not welcome further interruptions.

He directed me off on one of the parkway exits and presently we were driving down a country road.

As we approached a crossroads, he touched my arm. "Just after we get through this intersection, please turn off your lights, if you can possibly inch along without them. If

Mr. Spanleigh's directions are correct, we will have only a quarter mile to go."

I drove through the intersection and then crept along in the darkness. It was difficult business keeping to the road.

Leffing sensed my concern. "We can't do worse than slide into a ditch. If someone were watching from a distance, the car lights would reveal us."

I continued along and presently Leffing touched my arm again. "The first house on the right; you will see lights, I believe. There is a garage in the rear of the house. We are to drive in there and then shut the doors when we come out."

It was not easy to grope along without lights on unfamiliar ground, but I managed to maneuver the car into the garage. We shut the doors and stepped away into the shadows.

Leffing's voice was barely audible. "We may have a long wait and it may of course be entirely in vain, but there is no help for it."

We established ourselves behind a screen of hedges and looked toward the house, a large white frame colonial, half in shadow. Lights were visible through several windows.

Spanleigh sat bolt upright at a small table near a reading lamp. His form was somewhat obscured by a curtain but there was no mistaking his profile. I was somewhat puzzled by his rigid posture until I

recalled his ramrod military bearing.

I bent toward Leffing. "Isn't he taking an awful chance?"

"We must bait the trap, Brennan! There is no help for it!"

The minutes passed slowly and as the evening wore on, the air grew colder. I shifted from one foot to another. Occasionally I fingered the Sauer automatic in my jacket pocket.

Spanleigh sat on unmoving, without so much as a single glance toward the window. I felt that he was taking a terrible and unnecessary risk, but I admired his courage nonetheless.

Nearly two hours had passed and I was beginning to shiver in the cold moonlight when Leffing suddenly gripped my arm. As I glanced aside at him, he nodded toward a clump of rhododendron bushes to our left and on a line with the lighted window where Spanleigh sat.

I heard the faint crack of a twig and then a soft sibilant sound as rhododendron leaves slid against one another.

I drew out my automatic and looked toward Leffing but he shook his head. "Not yet!" His voice was so low I wasn't sure whether I heard him audibly or only mentally.

Just as I shifted my eyes back toward the rhododendron bushes there was a flash of flame and two twin roars in quick succession. I

heard, mixed with the roars and immediately afterward, the crash and tinkle of window glass.

Almost at once, and before either of us had time to move, a bizarre and frightening figure, yellow and misshapen-looking in the moonlight, reared out of the rhododendrons and began a sort of hopping run across a strip of lawn toward the adjacent driveway. It was carrying something which looked like a crutch.

Leffing leaped from behind the hedges into the drive. "Halt!"

The creature, whose twisted face had been suffused with a look of gloating triumph, now turned toward us a countenance which changed into a malignant mask of hatred.

With an alacrity which was startling in view of its obvious handicaps, the intruder dropped its crutch, whipped a long knife from somewhere, and leaped sideways toward Leffing.

Fleeting, as I raised my Sauer automatic and fired, I had the unpleasant thought that I was shooting at a disabled person. But I was also aware that Leffing's life was in imminent danger. And I was convinced that the hideous thing before us had just killed Spanleigh.

My first shot went wide and the thing came on but my second struck it in the right shoulder. It dropped the knife and spun around, losing its footing. A

scream of rage rang through the night.

As it went down, Leffing rushed in. Threshing, kicking, clawing, biting, the creature fought like a maniac. I circled the two of them, trying to stun the murderous thing with the butt of my automatic.

"Can't you get a lick in?"

I whirled around. Spanleigh, looking excited but completely uninjured, stood just behind me.

Crowding down my amazement for the moment, I quickly returned my attention to the struggle going on before me. Leffing had by now got a sort of arm lock on the writhing monstrosity, but in spite of the blood running down its shoulder, it continued a wild resistance. It paused, finally, just momentarily, but in that space of seconds I brought the butt of my automatic down on its head. It collapsed and lay still.

Leffing stood up. His face was badly scratched; blood was smeared on his clothes and the back of one of his hands had been torn open by the thing's teeth.

Spanleigh frowned at the wound. "You'll do well to get a rabies shot, Mr. Leffing! That creature reminds me of a mad dog!"

Shrugging, Leffing wrapped a handkerchief around his hand. "This can wait. Get a bandage on its shoulder and then truss it up with some good cord!"

We carried the would-be as-

sassin inside and Spanleigh produced a first-aid kit. After we got the thing's shoulder swathed in bandages, we tied it hand and foot with clothesline rope.

While Spanleigh dressed Leffing's ripped hand, I telephoned for the police.

Our murderous guest regained consciousness and uttered not a syllable but glared at the three of us with an expression which made me shudder.

While we waited, I strayed into the drawing room where I presumed Spanleigh had been sitting and saw why he was still with us. A cleverly-constructed silhouette dummy, made of papier-mache and modeling clay, was propped upright near the reading lamp. It was riddled with shotgun pellets.

The discovery of the dummy angered me. Leffing could have eased much of my apprehension if he had told me in the first place, while we kept our moonlight vigil, that it was a mannikin and not Spanleigh which I saw through the drawing room window. But I knew it would be useless to remonstrate. Leffing's penchant for melodrama was part of the man.

Before the police arrived, I went outside and retrieved the wooden support which the would-be killer had dropped. It was a crutch, all right, but cleverly strapped to it and concealed by heavy padding, was a short double-barrelled shotgun. The butt of

the weapon appeared to be the armpit rest of the crutch.

Hours later, after our thwarted assassin had been delivered into the hands of the police, Leffing told me how he had unraveled the macabre business.

We were back in my friend's Victorian living room with a bottle of twenty-year-old cognac on the antique marble-topped table between us. The mellow glow of gas light softly illuminated pieces of treasured art glass, tastefully distributed around the room.

Leffing thoughtfully sipped his brandy. "I considered your Africa-Nepal theory," he said, "but soon discarded it. Even if a native fanatic had managed to enter this country—which was unlikely—he would scarcely use the ace of spades as a death warning. It was totally out of character! The tiger symbol, I admit, appeared to tie in with a hunting expedition, but I suspected that the choice of that drawing had some other motivation.

"Moreover, the target arrows and the sketch of death as a black skeleton crossing a white bridge, did not appear to indicate an Asian or African fanatic.

"I cast about in other directions; Spanleigh's life seemed above reproach. I considered, briefly, that he might have made an enemy on Wall Street, but I could discover no evidence of it. At last, in desperation, I investi-

gated his military background. It seemed to offer no clues. He had been awarded a Bronze Star; he had been popular with his fellow officers and well-liked by the enlisted personnel.

"Purely as a matter of routine, I obtained a history of Spanleigh's Division during World War II. It had been published in book form in 1945. Almost immediately I felt that I might have a lead! Spanleigh's Division was known as the Red Arrow Division, a red arrow being the insignia carried on the divisional arm patch!"

"The book was well written and contained a wealth of detail. I read it carefully. Spanleigh figured in several interesting actions, minor perhaps, in overall scope, yet important at the time in their own particular area. One such action, in particular, caught my attention.

"Spanleigh—Major Spanleigh, you will recall—and six enlisted men were trapped by a sudden and unforeseen German advance in the small French town of Pont-Blanc. They retreated to a cellar. They had rifles, grenades and a machine-gun. They had no radio communication. The German infantry were wary, and Spanleigh decided they might hold out and possibly even keep the town if one of them could slip through the closing German noose, make his way back to their own Divisional Artillery Headquarters and bring

down a concentrated artillery barrage on the environs of the town where the enemy was congregating.

"Spanleigh decided to go back himself. The men had no objection; in fact they apparently considered their chances of survival would be greater if they remained in the cellar. They felt certain that Spanleigh would be killed. German snipers had moved into the town and Spanleigh would have to pick his way for many blocks through the rubble.

"Spanleigh did manage to get out of the town, but by then the German ring had already closed and he was unable to reach his own lines. In a desperate effort to escape capture, he was forced to hole up in a wrecked, abandoned freight car for two long days and nights.

"Fighting desperately, meanwhile, the enlisted men in the cellar held off the German infantrymen for hours. Finally, as dusk fell, the Germans got into communication with one of their own armoured units. Two Tiger tanks entered the town and advanced on the cellar.

"The trapped men must have undergone the tortures of the condemned as they heard the Tiger tanks come clanking and roaring through the night. They knew that they were doomed. If they dared to leave the cellar, they would be instantly shot down. If they re-

mained, the Tigers would blow them to pieces.

"The tanks approached the cellar from opposite directions, rolled right up to the walls, rammed their cannons into the gaping cellar window apertures and let go."

Leffing poured more brandy. "Just before the tanks reached the cellar, one of the doomed men, clawing about in a frenzy of fear, located a sort of trap door under the mass of straw and trash which covered the cellar floor. The trap concealed a shallow pit apparently used for the storage of garden produce. At the last possible moment, this man dove into the pit and pulled the door shut above himself.

"When the two Tiger tanks fired into the cellar, the other five men were killed instantly. The man in the pit survived, but when counterattacking American troops found him several days later, he was more dead than alive. Shell fragments had ripped through the trap door, severely wounding him in the back, head and legs. The terrible concussion of the guns had destroyed his hearing. And he was nearly mad with pain, thirst and sustained terror.

"As he lay helpless and delirious in the pit, with the trap door closed above him, he had fearful, unending nightmares about being buried alive. It seemed for many months that his mind might be totally destroyed.

"Although it appeared certain that he would never walk again, his mind at last cleared, or at least partially so."

Leffing paused. "The exact timing of what came later is not certain. But one thing we know: the crippled man somehow learned that Spanleigh, far from being killed, had eventually slipped back to the American lines without so much as a scratch.

"The terribly wounded man brooded about this. Finally he became convinced that Spanleigh had deliberately left the enlisted men in the cellar in order to save his own life. He believed that Spanleigh was responsible for the death of his five companions and for his own ghastly injuries and prolonged suffering. He felt that Spanleigh had hidden himself in the wrecked freight car, callously abandoning his own men, in order to save himself.

"What he could not see was that had Spanleigh not hidden himself, surrounded by German infantry as he was, he would inevitably have been killed or at best captured. In either event, Spanleigh could not have helped the trapped men."

"Surely," I interrupted, "all this information was not contained in a divisional history!"

"Not all of it, no. Only the bare outlines of the event. Other details I obtained from the War Department, from other personnel who

had served in the Division, and from Spanleigh himself."

"Spanleigh of course recognized his enemy at once?"

Leffing shook his head. "He did not. He had always believed that all six of the men were killed. He had learned that one was rescued barely alive, but hearing no more, and knowing the circumstances, had simply assumed that the terribly wounded man had died. The unfortunate man was evacuated to a field hospital, thence to a hospital in England. Eventually he was flown to a special clinic in the States. Spanleigh's unit, meanwhile, had moved on into Germany and all connection was broken."

I nodded. "Please go on."

"Until our would-be assassin is in a condition which warrants an interview, we must sketch out the rest of the story. But it seems obvious that the man's grudge against Spanleigh turned into a savage, half-mad obsession over the years. He probably lived only for revenge. Quite possibly his thirst for vengeance actually contributed to his partial recovery. It was a case of strong iron will over unwilling matter!"

"As a patient at the local veterans' clinic, he learned to walk again, using a crutch only on his bad days. Somehow he tracked down Spanleigh. When he learned that his enemy was right in this area, his determination for revenge must have been intensified."

"How did you get on to the Wednesday pattern?"

"Simply enough. The poor fellow was given Wednesday afternoon and evening off every week. He didn't have to report back to the clinic until midnight. On Wednesdays he prepared and mailed his threatening missives and fired the two red arrows. And of course the climax came on a Wednesday night."

"But I don't see how he managed to get about with those arrows and the shotgun."

"The arrows were no problem. He probably carried them along with the standard equipment of any archer. Who would challenge him? And as you saw, the shotgun was very cleverly concealed by being strapped to that heavy crutch, with the gun's butt forming the arm-pit rest. He would have little trouble in obtaining the shotgun. Probably said he was trapshooting; he may have had a hunting license."

"I did not wound him badly?"

"Not at all. He will be none the worse in a few weeks, I trust. Let us now hope the clinic turns its attention to his injured mind. They have done all that is possible for his injured body."

I sighed. "It is a very pathetic and terrible little story. I still don't understand fully, however, that business about the red arrows, the tiger and the skeleton on the white bridge!"

Leffing set down his glass. "Pure unconscious symbolism, in my opinion. The wounded veteran, subconsciously at least, wanted Spanleigh to know for what reason he was being threatened, for what reason he was to be killed. The red arrows symbolized the Division insignia. I believe the tiger stalking through the night was to be a reminder of the men's terror as the German Tiger tanks came clanking through the darkness.

"And the skeleton on the white bridge probably was an indirect reference to the town where the action took place, Pont-Blanc—which translated means 'White Bridge'!"

I shook my head. "I will never understand how you unravel these affairs!"

Leffing shrugged. "You could do the same, if you were less impatient and took time to carefully consider all the evidence one has at hand!"

"That may be," I admitted, "but in any event this case proves to me, as it ought to you, that a good private investigator can never be replaced by an electronic computer! I cannot conceive that a computer would ever untangle the business!"

Leffing's crooked smile seemed to light up his face. "You may be right! A bit more brandy?"



In the Next Issue—Exclusively Yours—

DEATH TIMES THREE

A Thrilling New Mike Shayne Adventure

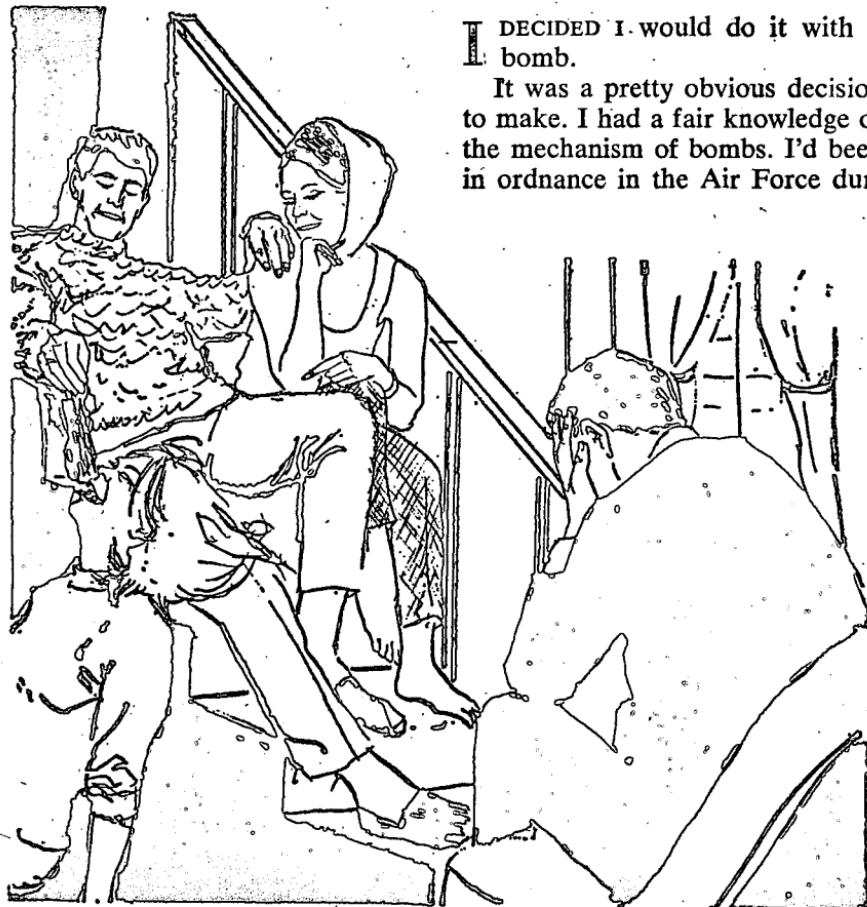
by BRETT HALLIDAY

He died hard, the old man, clinging to life as stubbornly as he had clung to his fortune. But now he was gone—and Mike Shayne took on his most unusual case. The vengeance path that had led a man to murder, and which would bring him to two more unless checked in time! Don't miss this dramatic story in the next issue!

The Best Motive in the World

*He was my foe, I his victim. But
I would stay alive. As for him . . .*

by C. B. GILFORD



I DECIDED I would do it with a bomb.

It was a pretty obvious decision to make. I had a fair knowledge of the mechanism of bombs. I'd been in ordnance in the Air Force dur-

ing one of our recent wars. Besides, I had my own little machine shop, with all the necessary facilities for making and assembling just exactly the kind of gadget I wanted.

What I wanted, you might say, was an anti-personnel bomb. Or maybe just an anti-person bomb. For just one person. Larry Cabe.

I didn't want to deliver the thing myself. Not that I would have minded seeing Larry Cabe die, but I preferred being far away, with an alibi if anybody thought of connecting me with Larry—or better still, not to be involved in the case at all. So I'd let the United States post office deliver my package.

The arrangement was such that no jarring or rough handling in the post office itself could cause an explosion. Of course an over-zealous postal inspector could look into the package, get himself killed, and spoil everything, but both he and I would have to take that chance. No, my package would have to be unwrapped, then opened, examined. Then a small spring would be activated—and then *blowie!*

I had to think of a package which Larry Cabe would be sure to open, that he couldn't resist. Larry had never been one for books, and a box of candy sent to a man might look suspicious. I finally settled on one of those fancy boxes of exotic shaving lotion, talc, and cologne. Larry was something of a dude; he'd find that kind of stuff irresistible.

It was a beautiful little wooden box, hinged and latched, almost like a woman's jewelry box. I removed the contents, of course, knowing I could take great pleasure in using the lotion, talc and cologne after Larry Cabe was dead. In fact, I could take pleasure in a lot of things after Larry was dead.

The mechanism, with the spring set, fitted inside the box nicely. Now the next time it would be opened, the result would be pleasantly fatal.

Then I added one last little touch. I wanted Larry Cabe to know, in that last instant of his life—in that one instant that a person still has even though they say he died instantly—I wanted him to know who was killing him. So on the outside of the box I taped a little card. It said, "Wear some of this when you come to meet my wife, so you'll be your old charming self. Sincerely, Emmett."

I thought Larry would appreciate the irony of that. Or maybe he'd take it as a peace offering, a token of my begging him to behave himself for just once, and leave my wife alone. And then, when the explosion happened, he'd know, in that last enormous instant of his life, he'd know that he could never steal anything from me again, that I was getting revenge finally for all the things he'd already stolen.

I wrapped the package securely. I put a fictional return address on the outside wrapping, because that might survive the blast, and so I

didn't want my name on it. The card on the box itself, of course, would be blown up along with Larry.

I drove a hundred miles out of town to put my package in the mail. Once it was in the hands of the post office I wouldn't be able to change my mind. Not that I'd want to. Killing Larry Cabe had been my fondest desire for a good portion of my life.

At home that night, I felt happier and more secure than I had for years. My package would be delivered in a couple of days, and then I would be completely secure. At long last after so many years of hatred and frustration . . .

Not even Rose's sour mood could smother my own cheerfulness. Dinner wasn't much, just some stuff she'd probably taken out of the freezer at the last minute. But I didn't complain. I didn't complain either when she wasn't very affectionate that evening. I was too happy.

I knew things would change for the better after Larry Cabe was dead. He'd always given me this inferiority complex. I guess it showed in my marriage with Rose. I wasn't a very dominating male, so I suppose I bored Rose at times. Well, just wait a couple a days, I told myself, and she'll see a new man.

I lay beside Rose in the darkness of our bedroom, and thought about my little package. I wondered exactly where it was. Probably on a

train or a truck somewhere, on its way back to this town. Tomorrow or the next day, depending on how efficient the post office was, a great weight would be lofted off me.

And once I began thinking, the memories went far back, back to the very beginning . . .

LAWRENCE CABE was a year older than I was, a year ahead of me in school. I didn't know him personally in those early days, just by reputation. He was the football and hockey star of the school. Larry was in the eighth grade. I was in the seventh. The eighth grade teacher was Miss Murtree. She was a tough one. She came into our room one day asking if there was anybody who could solve an arithmetic problem that her eighth graders couldn't manage.

"Emmett," she said to me, "you're good at arithmetic. You come with me."

I didn't have any choice. I walked meekly behind her, back to her home room. The first person I saw there was Larry Cabe, standing by the blackboard, staring at a maze of scrawled figures, chalk dust all over his hands.

"Larry can't work this problem," Miss Murtree told me, "and the rest of the class seems to be just as dumb as he is."

I should have known, looking out at all those faces behind the desks. Maybe some of them could have solved the problem, but they

had sense enough not to humiliate Larry Cabe in public that way. But I didn't know Larry as well as they did. He was a head taller than I was as we stood together in front of that blackboard. And the look he was giving me wasn't the most friendly kind.

"A gave half of his money to B," Miss Murtree was saying, "and then gave three-fifths of what he had left to C."

Or something like that. Foolishly I erased Larry Cabe's figuring from the board, and started doing my own over it. I had the answer in about thirty seconds.

"That's absolutely correct," Miss Murtree shouted triumphantly. There was some derisive laughter from the audience and a few anonymous catcalls at Larry Cabe.

Larry didn't say anything. He just kept on smiling at me till Miss Murtree said I could go.

And I thought that was the end of it. It was only the beginning.

Often later I blamed Miss Murtree. But actually it was a matter of psychology. Larry Cabe was a natural born bully. I was a natural born victim. Not every bully, I suppose, makes a lifetime career of just one victim. Larry happened to. The arithmetic problem just gave us the opportunity of getting acquainted. The first thing he did to me was petty revenge. The other things—well, Larry Cabe was mean that's all.

Seventh grade, that was the year

I had such a crush on a girl named Madeleine. Madeleine Foster. I used to walk her home from school almost every afternoon. That particular afternoon, I think I was telling her about the big success I'd been in front of Miss Murtree's class.

A few blocks away from school we met Larry Cabe. He'd been waiting for me. He said something like, "Hi, smart boy," to me, and he was smiling. He stuck out his hand. "Just to show you there's no hard feelings," he said.

The minute he had my hand in his, he started to squeeze. I screamed with the pain of it. He had a tremendous grip and he'd taken me completely by surprise. I stopped screaming and just moaned. I tugged at his wrist with my free hand, but he forced me down to a kneeling position in front of him, there on the public sidewalk.

Then Madeleine was shouting at him, telling him to let go of me, calling him a bully and everything else she could think of.

That was when he started noticing her. All right, he said. He'd let go of me if she'd walk the rest of the way home with him. Well, she refused at first, till I couldn't stand the pain in my hand any longer, and I was more interested in stopping that pain than in Madeleine or anything else. So I begged her, for Pete's sake, let him walk home with you, Madeleine.

Well, she did. He let me go, and I stood there and watched them walk off together. Madeleine kept looking back at me, but all I could do was hold my crushed hand. I wasn't thinking about rescuing her. And pretty soon she and Larry Cabe went around a corner.

He found me at school the next day and he told me. He told me he hadn't taken Madeleine straight home. They'd stopped and talked for a little while. Then they went to a drugstore and had a coke together. Then finally, he'd taken her down by the river bank.

So I never walked her home again. But she didn't care. I heard she went back to the river bank with Larry Cabe many times afterwards.

I suppose I must have gotten my first idea about killing him then. Schoolboy fantasies of Chinese torture and revenge. And he got whatever ideas he had about me. We kind of understood each other too. He knew I hated him, and how helpless I was to do anything about it. I knew, on the other hand, that the real reason he enjoyed tormenting me was that very hatred I felt.

So a kind of relationship was established between us. We weren't friends or buddies, but in a way we were. We sort of kept track of each other. And especially Larry kept track of me.

Like with the summer job I wanted in high school. The one at



the swimming pool. When Larry found out I'd applied for it, he applied too. And talked the man into hiring him because he was better for the job. He really didn't want it and he quit a month later. He just did it to spite me.

And all the girls I ever went with in high school, the ones he could bring himself to like any little bit, he simply took away from me. Like he had with Madeleine Foster. With the others he just made them wish he'd take them away. Like Mary Jane Giles. She went to the prom with me but spent all her time looking for Larry.

I remembered it all. All the names and places, and all the details. And I added it all up.

Larry Cabe and I went to the same college. It was high school repeated. He plagued me relentlessly. I was his best entertainment,

and he had an insatiable appetite to be entertained. I didn't do very well at college. Larry saw to that. I was expelled in my third year for cheating. Larry framed me, of course, but I couldn't prove it.

We were even together for a while in the army. That was where I had my best chance to kill him. I might have done it on the rifle range, for instance. I thought about it constantly, but I never could figure out how to make it look like an accident. I didn't want to be hanged or spend the rest of my life in prison for Larry's sake. Not then. Maybe I didn't hate him enough then.

The army saved me. It separated us by several continents. And I had a holiday from Larry Cabe for two years. I thought that was the end of it. We'd both grown up. The old feud had been kid stuff. We'd changed.

Well, we had. When we returned from service, we both had our busy, separate lives to lead. I went to work in a machine shop and Larry became a salesman. He sold lots of things, insurance, automobiles, stocks and bonds, real estate, and he did well at every one of them. He was restless, kept changing jobs. But even the advantage of being close to me never made him want to take off his white collar and put on overalls in a machine shop.

So we drifted apart. And when I fell in love Larry didn't even know about it for a long time. Her

name was Regina, and she was dark-haired and lovely. We talked about marriage. I'd almost forgotten about Larry Cabe.

Until we met him accidentally one evening at a restaurant. He was eating alone, looking sulky over in a corner, reading a newspaper. I hadn't seen him there when we'd first come in. But when I did see him, I wanted to leave, right in the middle of our dinner. But how could I explain it to Regina? I'm afraid of that man over in the corner? How can you admit fear to a woman who admires you, looks up to you as being a man?

So, like a fool, I sat there and hoped he wouldn't see us.

He didn't, until he got up to leave and pay his check. But then when he did see us, the sulky look left him, and his face lighted up like he'd just seen an old and dear friend. He came over to our table, and he said, "Emmett, old scout, now I know why you've been hiding from me."

Well, you can guess the rest. Larry Cabe had always been able to charm women, and he'd improved with age and practice. Even so, Regina wasn't quite as easy for him as Madeleine Foster had been. For a month she stubbornly refused to talk to him on the telephone or to go out with him. But in the end she was as doomed as I was.

She fell madly in love with him. They had an affair. When he refused to marry her, she left town in

shame and despair. She never came back.

As for me, I bought a gun. I made plans, just how to kill Larry Cabe, and where and when.

Only one thing stopped me. The thought I'd had before. No matter how careful I was, no matter how good an alibi I could arrange, the finger of suspicion would point inevitably at me. Because everybody knew that I had the motive.

And then Larry Cabe would have the last laugh of all.

After having made a lifetime career of tormenting me, of spoiling and destroying everything that belonged to me, he would have achieved the last, triumphant touch. Oh yes, he would be dead, but he would be laughing all the same, at me in prison, or in the execution chamber.

So I stopped. I put the gun away, and I let him live. But I was only waiting. Some day I was going to kill him. When the proper length of time had passed. When there would no longer be an obvious motive. When I could kill him and get away with it.

That was three years ago. In those three years I've made it a special point to keep out of Larry's way. I never mentioned to anyone that I knew him. I did nothing to attract attention. There must be no motive. Time must pass.

But a man gets lonely. I was one of the loneliest of men, because I lived in a special isolation that Lar-

ry Cabe had built around me. He had destroyed every chance I'd ever had to love and be loved. So I'd been lonely for a very long time, since the day I met him. And loneliness doesn't cure itself. It accumulates, multiplies, feeds on itself. And after a while it gets bigger than anything else, bigger perhaps even than hatred and the desire to kill.

That's why I married Rose. The bitter loneliness and the certainty that Rose was a woman whom Larry Cabe would never bother with. She wasn't ugly, but she was plain. She had a plainness that didn't stop with her face, but was in her soul too. Rose, with her pale blonde hair, her spare body, her small, satisfied mind, was completely different from Regina and Madeleine and all the others.

It worked well enough, for three years. I bought my own machine shop and I made a good living. I wasn't the perfect husband. I wasn't very assertive. I'd been humiliated too often in my life. And I knew all the time that even though I was married to Rose, Larry could, if he wanted to, take her away from me any time. That kind of situation doesn't make for a very healthy relationship in a marriage.

But we had something, Rose and I. And whatever that something was, I wanted to protect it. I realized that when the telephone call came from Larry Cabe.

"Emmett, old pal!" he said.

I knew right away who it was. And right away all the old emotions came back, the fear of him, the hatred of him.

"Emmett," he said, "I ran into an old friend of ours today."

I couldn't imagine who it was. Larry Cabe had pretty well seen to it that I'd never made many friends.

"It was Miss Murtree," he shouted over the phone. "We got to talking about mutual acquaintances. She said she keeps track of all of her old students through the vital statistics in the newspapers. And she told me you were married!"

Miss Murtree, of all people like an oracle or something in a Greek tragedy, setting the wheels of Fate in motion, and then years later, putting the seal of doom on the final scene. Poor old soul.

"What's the idea," Larry asked me, "being so sneaky? I'd have liked to come to the wedding." He laughed.

"It was a small, private ceremony," I told him.

"Well anyway," he said, "I want to meet the little woman."

That was the precise moment I decided I couldn't delay killing him any longer. Three years—the wait since Regina was surely long enough. There'd be no apparent motive. That is, if anybody ever really had connected Larry and me. There wouldn't be if I did it now, that is, before he could destroy the little happiness I'd managed to salvage with Rose. And

having decided then to kill him, to render him harmless by making him dead, I was suddenly no longer afraid of him.

"That would be fine," I told him calmly. "You could come over for dinner some time." I didn't want to seem to be afraid of him.

"I'd love to," he said. "When?"

I had to stall on that. I had to make plans. I knew that Larry was already making plans to meet my wife, look her over, decide whether he wanted to go to the trouble of taking her away from me.

"I'll have to check with Rose first," I said.

"Oh, her name is Rose, huh?"

"Yes."

"And you have to check with Rose first? Who's boss in your family, Emmett old pal?"

"Well, I just think it's what I ought to do. I'll call you back."

He gave me his address and telephone number. Maybe he knew I was stalling. But there was no hurry. He could afford to wait. Maybe he even figured it would be a good idea to make me sweat a while.

I didn't tell Rose about Larry's call, of course. I didn't want her asking me questions when the story appeared in the paper, about someone named Larry Cabe's having met a mysterious end.

Meanwhile I did some checking. Larry wasn't married, though apparently he had been for a short time once. But Larry had never been the kind to stay with one

woman for very long. He lived in a small bachelor apartment. It was a dump. He didn't seem to entertain any of his girl friends there. That fact was probably what gave me the bomb idea. There would be no one else opening a package addressed to Larry.

I didn't call him right back as I had promised. Instead I started work on the bomb. It took almost a week, designing the apparatus, gathering the materials, assembling it. One had to be careful.

Larry called me once again. "Say, Emmett, old pal, I've been expecting to hear from you."

"Next week maybe," I said. "Rose hasn't been feeling too well."

"Okay, old pal, but don't forget me."

How could I forget him? He was practically all I thought about these days. Here I was, lying in bed next to Rose, and I was thinking about Larry.

I mailed my package on a Tuesday! On Wednesday I was nervous, full of anticipation. On Thursday I could hardly contain myself. I went to the shop, but every time I tried to do some little job I spoiled it, because my hands were shaking so much.

It was late in the afternoon on Thursday, almost five o'clock, when the two plainclothes policemen came into the shop. They wanted to talk to me in private, they said. We went into my little cubicle and shut the door. I kept

my hands in my pockets to try to keep them from trembling.

"Did you know a man named Larry Cabe?" One of the detectives did all the talking while the other seemed to be looking through the glass walls to see what kind of machinery I had in the shop.

I answered as calmly as I could. "Went to school with a fellow named Cabe, if it's the same one."

The detective nodded. "It's the same one. He met with an accident today."

I waited.

"Got blown up with a home-made bomb that was sent to him through the mail."

Some comment was necessary, so I said, "That's terrible!"

The detective nodded again. "It was murder."

"Larry Cabe murdered! I can't believe it."

"The body was in pretty bad shape, but we identified it."

I tried to think of something else to say. Anything.

"Is there anything I can do?" I asked finally.

"Yes, as a matter of fact there is," the detective said. "You can come and identify the other body."

"Other body?" I stared at him for a minute. Maybe I knew already, and maybe I didn't. "What other body?"

"Your wife's."

And then I knew the mistake I'd made. I should have killed Larry Cabe a long, long time ago.

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THE WILL TO LIVE

by

ALEX

JACKINSON

*The train roared through the night,
and for trapped Lyle Rentwood it was
a one-way journey. For him, no transfer.
For him, Death was the next stop . . .*

FROM THE MOMENT that Janice Atwill had notified the police of his whereabouts, Lyle Rentwood wondered how she would react to the truth—that he had run away to keep from testifying against her father, Mark Atwill.

A great guy, Mark—viewed one way. Kind, debonair, gracious. He always picked up the tab. Janice only knew him as her friend. He was a modern, well-informed parent. That was as Janice saw him. Viewed another way, Mark Atwill was as long-armed a conniver as ever served as director of purchases

for a large hospital, and Midwood General was one of the largest in the United States.

Meat, fruit, vegetables, drugs, supplies of all sorts had to be approved by Janice Atwill's father. What he approved mostly was output from non-brand firms, firms which indulged in kickbacks. Two grand here, three there. Multiplied many times the sums, banked in the name of Andrew Golch, became staggering.

Janice's father did not keep all that he raked in. Half went to Humphrey Forbes, who had two



hands and a dozen fingers, each dipped into some racket.

Once Lyle Rentwood learned of the situation, he carefully weighed alternatives. His controller post at Midwood did not pay as much as he might have gotten in private industry, but working in a hospital

appealed to him. He liked the strong aspect of being of service. In his spare time he prepared tax returns for some of the executives. Atwill inadvertently left an opening which Rentwood pursued, and found it a Pandora's box he half-wished he hadn't touched.

He could change jobs easily enough, of course. Or he could cynically feel: *Why fume? Just about everybody has itching palms.* If he wished, he could expose the racket. Janice would go along, but he wanted to tell her when *he* was ready. He also had to consider the black eye to the hospital. Rentwood decided to stay on, fight for reforms from within. Unexpectedly, an investigation started, and at that point Lyle fled.

Concerned about Janice Atwill, he had come to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where she attended the University. He had written hastily, asking her to please reserve judgment until they talked. On impulse, she had sent a telegram to the district attorney: **RENTWOOD HERE. WIRE INSTRUCTIONS.**

Now, on a north-bound Pullman, Rentwood looked gloomily at Janice and at the flat-nosed detective who had flown in to bring him back. A well-intentioned step on Janice's part, it would have the effect of a decorative candle turning into a torch. The irony forced him to smile, a smile which had graveyard overtones.

Janice spoke first. "Lyle," she said, "possibly I shouldn't have acted before seeing you. I was hasty, perhaps foolishly so. But I was terribly angry at you when you ran away."

Lyle Rentwood considered what awaited her. Loving the beautiful blonde girl, he wanted to absorb, or

temper, the blow. He couldn't. Not now. Now there could be no easy way for her.

Rentwood shifted his gaze moodily to the window. Ever since the train had cleared Raleigh, he thought with some uneasiness that it was going almost too fast. It was a morbid thought, but still— It was unlike Forbes not to act quickly and decisively. He was the kind of man who would consider dead witnesses the only ones to be trusted.

Wary, Rentwood looked suspiciously at the detective sitting across the Pullman seat.

Officially, Humphrey Forbes was the head of All-Chem Drug Company. Respectable enough on the surface, Forbes dabbled in black-market LSD, and he had some prime underworld connections.

When the train presently pulled into a station, Rentwood looked about him alertly. No one left, but passengers got on at either end. Suddenly Janice jumped to her feet, cried: "Dad!" Jerking his head around sharply, Rentwood saw Mark Atwill hurrying towards them.

Kissing his daughter, Atwill said smoothly, "I flew down to meet the train—and to say a few things privately to Lyle, if I might be permitted."

Janice's enthusiasm was forced. She said, "Lyle probably wants to strangle me; on the credit side, a

Ex-Hospital Aid Indicted in 26 G Payolas on Food

lot of my school chums will stop wondering if either of you is the mysterious Andrew Golch."

For Rentwood it was a fresh reminder that Janice had a fixed conception of her father. And a most distorted one.

Rentwood had got to know the director of purchases as a man who had soured on his early better-the-world idealism. As if to fill the vacuum, he became a chaser of cuties, a man who kept a lavish hotel hideout for purposes which his family must not know about. Getting himself deeply involved into mixing with racketeers, he lived like one, but outwardly Atwill presented a pious front.

He tilted his daughter's chin. "Honey, you're a good kid. But on *this*, I wish you had contacted me before acting so impulsively."

And, as she stared at him: "We are a nation of extremists, dear. Not too long ago it was considered perfectly proper—ethical as well as legal—for a TV entertainer or a disc jockey to make an outside investment and then to plug the firm's product. Now it isn't. Now the pendulum swung to the other extreme.

Now payola is suspected everywhere."

He paused, smiled and added: "Like any large hospital, Midwood spends a lot of money on the purchase of beds to aspirin. A lot of merchants are eager to sell. Some hirelings in my office might have accepted bribes. If so, I certainly want to know about it. But we want to do our own investigating. Still less do we want to become victims of a political smear campaign."

"Political?" Janice's brows arched.

"Yes, *extremely* political and partisan. As in any large organization, there are factions and rivalries at Midwood. It's the old Army game. The "outs" seek office by sensational cries of graft, true or alleged. You see—"

Janice broke in. "Dad, I learned the political facts of life a long time ago. But where does one draw the line? I'm furious with Lyle for not agreeing that kickbacks must be exposed."

Atwill knew when to pull back. "You're twenty and idealistic. In my time I went all-out for socialism. I can't blame you for acting as you

did. But I do think you beat the gun."

Janice shook her head. "I know you and Lyle are shielding this mysterious Mr. Golch because you both feel that there is something sacrosanct about a hospital. There should be as it pertains to healing, but honesty is honesty and *dishonesty* calls for—handcuffs might be a good word."

Atwill shrugged, still smilingly. "Ah, youth. But we'll pick it up when you return, dear."

When she turned down the aisle, Rentwood saw Atwill slip a folded bill to the detective, who palmed it deftly. The D.A. man relinquished his seat, letting a cold, precise look say that one thing had nothing to do with another. His voice bristled, too.

"Rentwood, you're not a regular criminal, so I didn't yank out the silver. I'll not nail you down while I stretch my legs either. But don't get ideas, feller. Just don't!"

The moment he walked off, Atwill stopped play-acting.

"You idiot," he said softly but sharply. "Contacting the kid!"

Rentwood's mood swirled in pools of anger. "I felt I *had* to. In case you forgot, I'm in love with Janice."

"So? I'm in love with my wife."

"I meant to explain things calmly. Once the pressure began, I couldn't. As you saw, she still doesn't know."

"Good," Atwill said. "I do not

want Jan to ever learn. Without your testimony, Golch cannot be identified, and it's fixed for you to take the fifth. A lawyer will get on at Philadelphia whose job will be to brief you on what you can and cannot say. Later you may again have to take a vacation. Only until the investigation will fold, which will be soon."

"No soap." Rentwood felt no need to deliberate. "It would only postpone, not settle matters. I can't go on ducking subpeonas forever. Sooner or later Janice will have to know." He was angry, and he did not care if it showed.

"Son, please. You know how I feel about the kid, and she about me."

Rentwood shook his head. "Do you want to know something? I'm glad I stopped running. I hated to testify against you. But against your partner I'd like to be a witness."

Atwill said morosely, "Blow off steam if it will make you feel better. Stop running if it gets in the way of your conscience. On the stand, though, you'll have to play the script Forbes' way. No two ways about it!"

"That's more definitely out than a second flight," Rentwood said emphatically. "I made it clear all around the first time that I'd skip. Once sworn in, it would be the truth. To me being under oath still means something!"

Atwill screwed up his lips. "You realize what you're buying? You

can't name me without bringing in Humph."

"Slugs in my head, probably," Rentwood said.

"Lyle, you're not six years older than my daughter; you're twice that many years younger, to think you could buck something way beyond you."

"Didn't you consider that some day the gravy ride would end?"

"I didn't want to think of it. End of the ride would be the end of *me*." Atwill touched Lyle's arm desperately. The panic was thick enough to grasp.

"You're ordering a one way ticket to hell, son. *Think!* If you survive, I'll have to go!"

"Sorry, my mind's made up. Even running away once was one too many."

Janice returned, and right after her the detective. When they were seated, Atwill pulled a pack of filter-tip cigarettes out of a pocket. He withdrew two, passed one to Rentwood, held on to the other.

Rentwood had the cigarette in his mouth. "Can you smoke here?"

"Others are smoking," Janice said. She had taken the pack from her father, picked a cigarette for herself, lit it immediately. The detective preferred his own brand. Between puffs, Janice caught Rentwood's attention.

"Lyle, once you showed up at the dorm, events moved so swiftly, I couldn't ask: does your mother know?"

"Not unless the papers spilled it."

"They didn't as of this morning," said Mark Atwill.

Rentwood thought back to that last day at home. *Mom, I've got to run. If it wasn't Jan's father, I'd battle demons.*

It all began that summer day when Janice Abbott had walked into the hospital's accounting department. For Rentwood, the first sight of her unleashed currents that were very familiar and yet strangely new. Because each to the other became unique, exciting.

For Lyle Rentwood it was love in a way he hadn't previously experienced. Strong, long-range love, with marriage shelved until she finished school. Another term. Then she planned to teach.

Rentwood studied Janet. She looked beautiful, but grim. Her eyes especially reminded him of violets framed in crepe. Considering what lay ahead, he thought the touches of black fitted.

From her his gaze shifted to the detective. It was like turning attention from a sunset to a mass of dark clouds. The man's face seemed chiseled out of pink rock. He smiled little and spoke less. Easy to imagine that in a precinct back room he would be more eloquent "talking" with his mallet-hard fists.

AS THE TRAIN rolled speedily through April-green countryside, Lyle Rentwood continued to

brood. If Forbes' operatives were on board, he wanted to know it. Seeking an excuse to look, he arose, ran a large hand across his handsome, stubble-rough face.

"Mind if I go back now?" he said to the detective. "I could stand a shave."

"Okay. But show up before we pull into a station."

In the aisle, taking a safety razor and a tube of brushless cream out of a duffle bag, Lyle Rentwood looked in either direction. Directly across, two bobby-soxers were chattering noisily.

Ahead of them sat a young clergyman. The compartment opposite him was empty, but the one in front was occupied by two middle-aged women. At the opposite end of the car a tall marine was eyeing a pretty brunette. The rest of the old, badly-kept Pullman was empty.

No danger here. If there was, it was hidden so expertly he couldn't fight against it anyway. Walking into the next car, Rentwood still saw no signs of suspicious-looking characters, but eyed the refreshment man indecisively.

The man followed Rentwood through the door of the men's room, left the basket on a bench and lit a cigarette.

Lyle Rentwood soaped his face, reminding himself as he looked at the basket that he was hungry. He dug into a pocket and found some change, his wallet having been confiscated.

The sandwich man looked at Lyle Rentwood with a dumb, good-natured grin. Rentwood did not feel it was safe to buy a sandwich until the marine walked in and bought one. Coating bread with a layer of mustard, Rentwood watched the vender open two Coke bottles, but there was only one straw left, which he handed Rentwood. Between gulps and bites, he finished shaving.

Some liquid remaining in the bottle, he brought it with him to his seat, took a final sip and left the empty bottle against the window wall. Soon after he returned, Atwill unexpectedly scrambled to his feet.

"How about lunch? It's past two."

Rentwood regretted the sandwich, but decided that save for skipping bread and dessert, he could still do justice to a fair-sized meal.

At the diner, no table for four was available. Waiting in the narrow aisle, Rentwood suddenly began to feel as though ice picks were stabbing into his lungs. He began to breathe at an accelerated rate. Mumbling, "Be right back—excuse me," he stepped with difficulty to the next car. Whatever might be happening, he wanted to be alone.

Now it seemed as if some demon in his head began to use an electric drill. There was only the foggiest coordination, and even

that little was ebbing away, like something tantalizingly pulled out of reach.

Dazed, he drew a handkerchief, wiped his moist face. The center of pain returned to his throat. He wanted a drink of water badly, and began to walk down the long aisle to the men's room. Midway in the car he stopped, unable to move further.

He waited. When he tried, he was again able to walk, half-blindly. He thought he'd get his drink at the water cooler near the ladies' compartment, which seemed closer. He took several faltering steps.

He wanted water more urgently; sharply, the pains moved to his stomach, and a fear of vomiting warned him towards the other end of the car. He turned around, wondering dazedly if it was obvious that he was passing out? The conductor did not seem to notice, nor the passing bobby-soxers and the minister from his train. He observed what was going around him, but the impressions were distortedly grotesque, like objects seen in a convex mirror.

With mounting hardship Rentwood made his way along the aisle, and turned into the men's lavatory. No one was there except the sandwich man, smoking again. He nodded casually, said, "Bub, mind keeping an eye on the basket?" Taking assent for granted, he left.



Lyle Rentwood stood still. The room itself coiled into a gyrating ball which threw off colored sparks as it spun—big red and green sparks which began to turn blue, then dissolved to a shifting mountain of clouds.

He was asleep and dreaming; but he knew that he wasn't in bed and shouldn't be asleep. *A mickey*, his thoughts telegraphed. That must be it. How?

Rentwood doubted that the coke or sandwich was drugged. The same blurred, choppy reasoning urged him to get up. He made a try, but for some time he was not sure whether he was on his feet or only imagined that he was. There was just the dim awareness that he'd guessed right about his executioner being on board, with other weapons substituted for bullets.

He made a concentrated effort to shake off the stupor, told himself that he worked in a hospital, and should know what to do. With what? Nothing here save— He

looked at the basket, which still seemed so distorted, he could not see as much as feel it. But he knew in what corner the jar of mustard stood, reached for it and brought the jar to the sink.

He still had the strength to turn the tap. He filled the half-empty bottle with water, stirred the mustard feebly with a slab of wood used for a spoon, and drank.

After he had rid himself of the poison, he caught his reflection in a mirror. His face was gray. Gradually the shattering first paroxysm passed.

The side door opened. When the vender saw him, he said surprisedly, "What happened to you? Ulcers?"

"Ptomaine poisoning." Rentwood uttered the first thing that entered his head. He was surprised he was able to speak. "I owe you for a jar of mustard."

"Skip it. Feel all right now?"

Rentwood nodded. He still felt dizzy and shaken, but cataracts no longer veiled his eyes. Slowly the convulsions in both mind and body eased. He washed, combed his hair, feeling a steady return of strength. What change remained, he gave the vender.

On the train platform, Lyle Rentwood tried to place when he could have gotten it. Not last night, when the local sheriff had picked him up, nor this morning, when the detective had brought him to the railroad station at Raleigh. On the

train? He had selected his own sandwich. The coke bottle was handed to him and he had seen the lid pried open. Puzzled, Rentwood noticed that the train was pulling into a station, the name of which he did not know.

The detective rushed through the door. "Getting cute, Rentwood? Thought I told you to stay —" After a closer look. "What the hell happened to you?"

"I got sick suddenly," Rentwood said.

"Over what? You look like a healthy guy."

"Don't know." Rentwood wondered whether to tell him what really happened. "I had that coke and a sandwich."

The detective was sure he had the right answer. "You must be afraid of the rap. Fear can do queer things to a system."

WHEN RENTWOOD joined the group after changing shirts, a table had not only been cleared, there had been time for drinks to be served. A long-stem cocktail glass filled with an amber fluid stood at the only setting which had not been disturbed. Rentwood pushed back the solid, leather-upholstered chair and seated himself opposite Janice. Her father sat next to her, with the detective facing Atwill.

Sipping a creamy Alexander, Janice said, "I ordered your favorite—a Manhattan, dry."

Rentwood thought that she

spoke as though merely to keep up appearances. Grieved, his gaze roved from her. On the table he saw two tall glasses with nothing in them save melting ice cubes. Near each glass stood an empty jigger. No food was yet served.

"What did you do, Lyle? Meet an old friend?" Atwill asked curiously.

I must look normal. Otherwise Lyle Rentwood was certain that Janice would have made some remark.

"Rentwood got sick on us," the detective said.

Rentwood brushed it off. "It was nothing." Inwardly he debated whether telling the truth would make a difference. Janice would be disturbed; the very mention of his sudden illness had brought a questioning look to her face, and he did not want her to be more distressed than was necessary.

In a matter of hours he would have to tell her, *Jan, your father is a crook.* However he might phrase it, the words would have a devastating effect.

Because learning would be a profound shock, he had tried hard to spare her. Now the last doubt removed itself that it was like an operation through which she had to go. He could only be on hand when she came out of the ether.

To be on hand, he had to stay alive. The thought made him feel as though a time bomb was hidden

under his chair. The first attempt failed, but Forbes' killers would try again. What remained unanswered was when and how.

He looked about him uneasily, seeing the clergyman and the bobby-soxers. The rest were from different cars. Lyle Rentwood doubted that bullets would fly here, again questioning if it would be to his advantage to be candid.

He picked up his drink and set it back on the table, a bit further from him than where the glass previously stood. He was clear-headed, though remnants of the nausea still lingered. There was nothing he now wanted to eat, and nothing to drink save tea, hot and strong, preferably something he had brewed himself.

Presently a waiter appeared to pick up the checks on which luncheon had been ordered. He waited while Rentwood wrote: *Tea, lemon. Toast.* Then the detective caught Lyle's look. "Will you pass your glass, Rentwood, if you don't intend to have your drink?"

Lyle handed over the cocktail, which the detective downed quickly.

"Lyle, I can't get it off my mind," Janice said concernedly. "It's just not like you to get sick. What do you think it might have been?"

"Poison. I know for a fact that I was poisoned." Rentwood regretted the words almost as soon as

they were uttered. The step taken, there could be no turning back. "I don't know with what, or how, but chances are I would have been dead except for a handy emetic."

Again he concentrated on the sandwich man, thinking that if he worked for Forbes, the vendor would stay on board, especially if nothing incriminating would be found in the food basket. Lyle Rentwood was certain that nothing would be.

Only one item would have been doctored, but how could they have been clairvoyant? There was just one answer—no one knew what he would order, but the bait was ready, regardless of what his choice might be. Forbes, Rentwood supposed, had worked out several alternate blueprints.

"If you're right, Lyle, this is serious business." Atwill said. He was going to speak further, but the detective interrupted.

Rising, he dropped his napkin on the table and glared at Lyle. "To make sure, I'll ask a few questions around the train. You had your warning. If you don't mind coming in with a couple of slugs in you, try hopping off!"

Glancing through a window Rentwood noted that the train was going at a much slower pace. A jump would be relatively easy, but now he considered escape a very good way to invite murder.

Food was brought, but he did not even care to have the tea. A

sense of impotence made him feel tied, and he did not like the feeling. He was not afraid of danger, not even of dying, only he liked his enemies out in the open.

Chafing, he unexpectedly felt a shock, as though uninsulated positive and negative wires crossed explosively.

Of course it had not been the coke or the sandwich! Following the discovery through, he went a step further. He did not want Janice to hear, and so wrote quickly on a piece of paper which he handed to Atwill. *Going back to our car. I think I'll prove how I was poisoned!*

At his seat, Rentwood saw that the discarded container, which they later used as a receptacle for other refuse, was still on the window sill, but that the coca-cola bottle had been removed. He waited for the porter to pass. The Negro listened attentively, then looked queerly at Rentwood.

"I'm not sure if I did pick it up, sir. Could be the refreshment man took it. Why?"

"It's not the bottle I want. There was a straw in it." Suddenly the notion became like a dream sequence, which, upon reflection, no longer seemed plausible. In Forbes' own plant, it was possible to spray the inside of a straw with some deadly poison, but Rentwood doubted that this was the right answer.

Back at the table, it was sev-



eral minutes before the detective rejoined them.

"The sandwich guy has been with the road ten years," he said. "The schmo probably thinks fox-glove is something ladies wear." After waiting like an actor for smiles which did not come, the detective added, "It's like I told Rentwood; fear can do queer things to a system. It must have been fear that made him grab his hat in the first place."

Atwill pushed away the plate in front of him. "The mind and stomach are very closely linked."

"Dad, you're going to be stuck with the check," Janice said. "At least finish what you ordered."

"Not as hungry as I thought I

was. It's always that way when I go without food too long."

The halibut steak he had ordered was barely touched, but he was smoking.

From the sound of Atwill's voice, Rentwood thought that no one could possibly guess that he was so agonizingly distressed. But he knew the man so well, he could almost feel the vibrations of worry. The one thing Atwill could never be cynical about was Janice, and she would have to learn.

Atwill also knew that even if legal loopholes kept him from jail, his usefulness to the Hospital was over. He would never again hob-nob with doctors, be privy to conferences which made him feel decidedly important.

I'm in the way of everything he values, Lyle Rentwood thought, and recalled what Atwill had said. "If you survive, I'll have to go." It made Rentwood look away from him uncomfortably. A moment later he again glanced sideways, noticing that Atwill had loosened the collar of his white shirt, moving down his tie to do so.

It was warm in the busy diner, but the action surprised Rentwood. On the hottest days Atwill wore his immaculately-tailored suits, and there was almost always a gardenia in his lapel. A passion for dignity automatically excluded the disorder of loose neckties.

Rentwood turned his attention to the tea, still warm enough to be

drunk. He poured some from the pot into a cup, sugared it. Before he could take a sip, he noticed that Atwill had turned pale. Perspiration began to break through the pores of his face in volume. The paleness flushed to a bright red.

"Jan, take it easy. I'm having a—heart attack."

"Dad!" Alarm rang like a bell in Janice's voice. "Dad!" She turned and hurriedly picked up a glass of water.

As she was bringing it to his lips, Atwill's mouth opened and shut tremblingly in a hoarse gasp. To Rentwood he resembled an inflated balloon which unexpectedly broke. If not for the detective reaching over, Atwill would have slumped to the table.

"Dad!" Janice cried again, her eyes darting about frantically. They settled on the steward. "A doctor on the train? Oh, there must be! My father is very ill!"

The steward's concern was genuine. "I'll have the conductors ask. Sorry this isn't a streamliner with a loud speaker system, Miss." The steward gestured. "Meanwhile the gentleman can be taken to compartment A in the next car."

The detective was at Rentwood's side. Together they carried Atwill to the private room, laid him on one of twin, narrow beds. Rentwood bent over him, drew down the skin under the eyelids. Then he felt for the pulse. He already knew the results from the

odor of bitter almonds on the victim's breath.

He also knew from the blue coloring that death had come as the result of some quick-acting poison, probably cyanide. He remembered from chem classes and from bits he had heard at the hospital, that cyanide acted swiftly, with corrosive effects on the respiratory tract and the stomach. The symptoms would be dizziness, vertigo, palpitations, vomiting.

Lyle Rentwood straightened, said sympathetically, "Sorry, Jan," and placed a hand on her head.

She continued to kneel beside her father, her expression of bewilderment turning to stunned grief.

"Dad's heart was never too sound, but the excitement . . . flying south to meet us." She pushed away Lyle's hand. "You didn't kill him, Lyle; it just happened, but leave me alone. Please. Please!"

Later much later, Janice was composed enough to speak to him.

In the private compartment, she looked at him. Her voice was again gentle.

"Sorry I almost blew up, darling. It wasn't your fault—not in a way you could be blamed. Things—just happen."

Rentwood said to the detective, "Mind? Just for a few minutes."

When the cop walked out, Rentwood tried to clear his throat, but the throb stayed. "Jan, I'm going to ask you to age years in a few seconds. Can you take it?"

She nodded.

"It wasn't his heart."

Another nod.

"I know," she said. "I've been terribly blind."

"What happened while I was away?" Rentwood asked.

"Nothing—and yet everything. Of course, I did not know it then. I reached for Dad's cigarettes, and he quickly pulled away the pack. Once he took a cigarette for himself, he smiled, and handed me the pack. Then it was all right for me to smoke. Lyle, that *one* cigarette. Those *two* cigarettes. I mean, the one he gave you."

Rentwood fingered the filter-tip butt he had taken out of the discarded container. No doubt that it was marked.

He gave me my chance and then had but one choice. Rentwood centered attention on Janice.

"You're being sick," she said. "Dad tried to kill you, didn't he?"

Rentwood nodded. "Not because *he* wanted to. He had to go along with Forbes, who is deadly."

Janice winced, but kept talking. "I shouldn't have been so hasty, so

unsuspecting. Now I see that I should have questioned Dad's large income. Stock investments, he used to say."

Having his answer how Janice would come through, a lot of worry sluiced away from Rentwood. He said, "Some quick-acting poison—cyanide, I'd guess—was concealed inside the filter. By sucking in smoke, the lethal dose was absorbed. Cyanide is at its worst as an inhalant. I survived because I'm younger and stronger, and because I had a strong will to live. Your dad wanted to be out of it."

Lyle Rentwood patted Janice's head. "Jan, let it stay a heart attack," he added. "Your father could have saved himself after I returned, but he decided there was just one honorable way out."

Janice nodded. He let her cry softly against his chest. Oddly, Rentwood felt as though his hand was raised in victory after a grueling fight. Now he could testify with ease. In many ways it was going to be a delight to watch Humphrey Forbes take a long look at the hell he had made.

Coming Soon:

Another TRUE CRIME STORY masterpiece

THE HUNT FOR PRETTY BOY FLOYD by DAVID MAZROFF

A Memory for Things Like That

by CLAYTON MATTHEWS



ONCE MAGGIE WARD heard something, was told something or read something, she could recall it verbatim, including punctuation, with a snap of her fingers.

When people marveled at her total recall, Maggie said she had a pornographic mind, and could never understand why they laughed so hard.

If some party pooper tried to explain the difference between pornographic and photographic, Maggie would only stare in utter bafflement.

Unbelievable? Not if you knew Maggie. Maggie was the original innocent. Not that she was without sin in the world's meaning of the word. Yet any sins she committed were committed in all innocence.

Maggie had never seen *Born Yesterday*, either on the stage or the movie version, and so she didn't identify with Billie Dawn when John D called her a dumb broad.

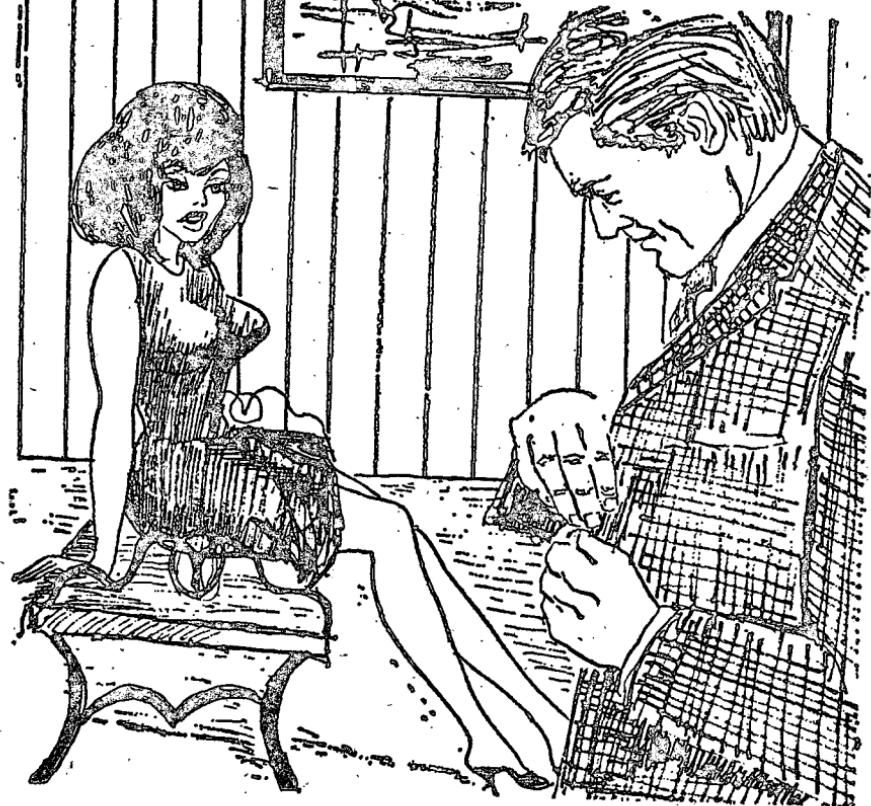
Maggie saw John D. Thornton for the first time in the lobby of a downtown hotel; she was running the cigar stand. There was a crush of people around the stand.

John D elbowed his way through, bought a dollar cigar, gave Maggie a five dollar bill and walked away without waiting for his change. Ten minutes later he pushed his way up to the counter again.

"Miss, I just gave you a five for this cigar and forgot to wait for my change."

"Yes, sir," Maggie said cheer-

When a strictly dumb broad takes up thinking—strong men run for cover and no man walks in safety . . .



fully. "You walked right off before I could make change. The serial number of your five is—" Maggie closed her eyes briefly, snapped her fingers and reeled off the num-

ber of the bill. Then she punched the register and handed him a five dollar bill. "That *is* your bill, sir?"

"Well, yeah, I guess so." He blinked down at it.

"Then if you'll return it to me, sir, I'll make the correct change. Your cigar was one dollar."

John D started to return the bill, then stopped. "Wait! Can you do that every time?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I memorize the serial number so I can identify the bill. Some people give me a five, then return and claim it was a ten. You'd be surprised at how they back down if I can remember the serial number."

With John D holding the bill so she couldn't see it, Maggie again gave him the right number. John D relinquished the bill and accepted his change. He was the only one at the counter now. He lit his cigar, eyeing her thoughtfully.

"That's quite a trick."

She was aware that he was studying her intently and was quite sure his interest was piqued only by her trick memory. In this she did herself an injustice. She was young, in good health, had thick brown hair, solemn blue eyes, a soft and generous mouth, and her figure was more than adequate.

But she didn't know how to buy, and wear, clothes that showed her figure to an advantage. Her hair was usually tousled, a lock or two escaping down over her eyes, and her use of make-up was, to be charitable, far from skillful.

In John D, Maggie saw a man close to forty, expensively groomed, with an olive complexion, black hair and dark eyes as

expressionless as buttons. There was an assurance about him, an air of command, the scent of money.

So when he asked her out to dinner, Maggie accepted, not jumping at it but accepting without coy posturings. She didn't receive *that* many dinner invitations.

He took her to an expensive restaurant on LaCienga. There were people waiting to be seated. John D didn't have to wait. He was greeted with a smile just short of obsequious, and he and Maggie were ushered to a quiet corner booth without his name being once mentioned.

John D ordered the drinks and dinner without consulting Maggie, a double bourbon for himself, a martini for Maggie, and two steaks medium rare.

Maggie didn't mind in the least; the men she usually went out with either ordered the cheapest items on the menu or took her to a place where there were no expensive items.

When their drinks were served, John D said abruptly, "What're you doing working behind a cigar counter?"

It was something like the ancient question, "What's a nice girl like you doing working in a place like this?" But Maggie didn't mind that, either. It expressed a curiosity she had learned to expect.

She said, "You mean my trick memory? What good is it, except on a stage somewhere in a freak



act? I mean with an education and some sort of training, okay. I don't happen to have either."

This led, naturally, into the short and uninteresting story of her life, which she told with very little prompting from John D. She made it last through dinner. She figured he was entitled to that at least for the dinner and the drinks. Whatever other compensation he expected, or demanded, he wasn't going to get, certainly not on such short acquaintance.

Somewhat to her astonishment, he demanded nothing else. In the taxi he didn't make the first pass, didn't even try to kiss her.

He did propose a game of license poker for a dime a hand. "Just to make it interesting," he said.

After three hands he suddenly asked Maggie to repeat her first license number. She snapped her fingers and gave it to him. John D

nodded seriously. Four cars and four license plates later, he asked her for his first license number. Maggie plucked it from her memory.

He nodded, evidently pleased, and said, "Let's knock it off, huh? It's a game for punks."

They were a few blocks from her apartment house by then. John D asked for her phone number, and Maggie gave it to him. He wrote it carefully in a small black notebook. The taxi pulled up to the curb. John D leaned across to open the door for her and said, "I'll call you."

Maggie got out, and the cab pulled away with a jerk, leaving her staring after it. She wondered what kind of a kook this guy was. Not that it mattered too much, since she likely would never see him again. She turned away with a shrug and went inside.

But she did see him again. A week later he came up to the stand just as Maggie was getting off work and offered to buy her a cup of coffee. In a quiet corner of the coffee shop, she learned what it was all about.

"You know what's rough on a bookie?" he began without preamble. "Handling all those blasted betting slips! That's how you take a fall. The cops chop down the doors before you can get rid of the slips and there's all the evidence they need. No slips, no case."

He took a sip of his coffee and

lit a cigar. "I once knew a guy who had a memory like yours. Never wrote a thing down. He didn't even keep a set of account books for the cops to find. Kept everything in his head. And that's where you come in, Maggie."

"I do? Where do I come in?"

"You go to work for me. I'll pay you ten times what you make at that smoke counter."

"But what do I do?"

"A bet comes in, it's recorded in that IBM memory of yours. And I'll use your head instead of a set of books. Nothing on paper, see?"

Maggie didn't quite see, but she kept silent as he went on to enumerate the advantages of working for him—sharing his suite in a Hollywood hotel, all the clothes she wanted, all the spending money she desired, trips to Vegas, et cetera.

Maggie was dazzled. What more could a girl wish for? The best she had ever hoped for was to marry a nine-to-five guy and settle down to an apron and diaper existence.

She accepted his proposition, and John D granted her one of his rare smiles. He walked with her out of the hotel and strode out into the street, ignoring the whizzing traffic, and whistled a cab into the curb. He ushered Maggie inside and gave the driver more than enough scrip to get her home.

And so her new life began. It was a luxurious existence compared to what she had known. The

hotel wasn't a Hilton, but it had a number of nice suites, one of which John D occupied. Maggie's bedroom alone was nearly as large as her former apartment.

John D wasn't stingy; he opened charge accounts for her in several department stores, and Maggie garbed herself in new clothes. John D didn't own a car, but he had to be one of Yellow Cab's best customers. He bought a couple of hundred dollars worth of cab scrip a month and let Maggie use all she wanted.

Maggie's day started early, a couple of hours before the Eastern tracks opened, and continued up until the first race at whatever West Coast track was operating that day. Then she was on her own until late afternoon, when the winners started calling in. Evenings they went out to dinner, a show or a Hollywood party.

John D was the pet of the Hollywood crowd. No party was thought complete without an underworld figure present and John D, who looked more like a Hollywood producer than a Hollywood producer, fitted right in. And his appeal was heightened with his acquisition of Maggie. Her memory was good for parlor tricks, and John D took great delight in having her perform.

Maggie had been curious from the beginning as to why he insisted on being called John D, but some instinct had warned her not to ask. One evening her curiosity was sat-

isified when a drunken actor asked belligerently, "John D? What kind of a name is that? What's the D stand for? John Dillinger?"

John D glowered at him. "I don't know any John Dillinger. All I know is John D. Rockefeller. What's good enough for a Rockefeller is good enough for me."

Maggie thought it fortunate those within hearing had the good sense not to laugh.

For the first two months Maggie was caught up in the excitement of her new job. But boredom soon set in. The names of horses and the sums bet flowing in and out of her brain had a narcotic effect. The constant ringing of the telephones in the suite began to grate on her nerves like sandpaper.

The thrill of being able to buy all the clothes she wished soon palled. She had never cared for movies, and she wasn't much of a reader. She was hard put to fill those empty hours in the afternoon. Having worked all day, five days a week, all her adult life, she felt vague guilty about being free afternoons.

A few times she hung around the suite, but John D had nothing for her to do when he didn't have information to feed into her memory. She got in his way, and he snarled at her, driving her out.

There was a small bar off the hotel lobby, uncrowded in the afternoons. Maggie wasn't a heavy drinker, but she did have an amazing capacity, and a few drinks

blurred the edges of her boredom.

The bar was where she met Hank.

Henry Fairchild was slender, wiry, with deft quick hands, cynical gray eyes, and a soft voice. He was about the same age as John D.

The second afternoon she was in the bar, Maggie introduced herself and told him she lived in the hotel.

The next afternoon she put on a tight pink dress with ruffles around the bottom and wore a floppy hat, the front brim of which kept dropping down to obscure her vision.

Hank brought Maggie her drink and said in his soft voice, "That hat won't do, Maggie."

"It won't?" She was truly astonished.

"Too big, too show-offish."

She waited until he had turned away before removing the hat.

She fluffed her hair nervously. When he came back down the bar a little later, not by so much as a word or a gesture did he indicate approval, but somehow she knew he did approve.

When she got up to leave, Hank leaned across the bar. "That dress won't do, either, Maggie."

"No?"

"Too gaudy. Too many frills. You look like Mae West in her prime."

"And that's bad?"

"Keep it simple, Maggie. Never forget that."

Maggie didn't go into the bar the next afternoon. She went shopping

instead and bought a very simple dress, simple as only the most expensive garment can be. And she stopped in at a beauty parlor and had something done to her hair.

The following afternoon Hank nodded gravely, leaning on the bar. "That's it, Maggie. Not a thing wrong with that dress."

There was one thing wrong with it: John D was paying for it. And Maggie knew such a thought would never have crossed her mind a couple of days ago.

She hadn't told Hank about John D. How could she? She knew it would destroy whatever was building between them. She wasn't at all sure what it was, but she wished she could hold it cupped in her hands as something very precious, very fragile.

One night Hank asked her out to dinner. Maggie had to lie to John D, telling him she was spending an evening with an old girl friend. John D seemed to accept the lie at face value, even saying, "That's okay, babe. Run along and have a good time. We've been sticking too close together anyway."

Hank Fairchild took her to a small, unpretentious restaurant. Even there they had to wait. Maggie didn't mind; she was as happy as she'd ever been in her life. Over their drinks Hank asked Maggie about herself. She had a story ready; she hated lying to him, but she saw no alternative. Actually it wasn't too fabricated; she just

failed to mention John D and her trick memory. She'd made up her mind Hank would never find out about either. In fact, she had made it a point to appear forgetful in Hank's presence.

And that was when she realized she was in love with Hank.

"Nothing interesting about my life, as you can see," she finished. "Dull as dishwater."

Hank shrugged. "My biography wouldn't win any Pulitzer prize, either. I was old enough to put in two years Army time at the tail end of World War the Deuce. I didn't shoot at a single enemy. To the best of my knowledge, none shot at me. Since then I've done this and that and a couple of other things. I found out I had a fair talent for mixing the booze. The last few years I've had my eye on a sauce dispenser of my own and have been squirreling away what I could toward that end."

If Maggie had been less than the innocent she was, she would have recognized the warning implicit in his last words. Hank wasn't ready for matrimony or any such financial drag. It wouldn't have mattered to Maggie even if she had understood. In her blissful state he could have been Jack the Ripper and she probably would have told him to take his best cut.

Hank managed to change over to a night shift, leaving him free afternoons until six.

And so Maggie was no longer

bored afternoons. Hank's small apartment made an excellent rendezvous. One afternoon Maggie summed it all up by saying, "Darling, I never knew. I never knew!"

"That, I take it, means you're happy?"

"I'm happy," she said. "You can believe it!"

"Then whatever happens, Maggie," he said, gray eyes for once without cynicism, "don't ever forget that."

But John D wasn't happy. He wasn't at all happy.

For Maggie, dreaming of Hank, would forget one minute what had happened the preceding one. Bettor's names and sums bet fed into her brain came out scrambled. She was like a juggler who, capable of keeping an incredible number of Indian clubs in the air at the same time, suddenly takes to dreaming, lets them come crashing down around his head and couldn't care less.

John D snarled at her to no avail. But when she mixed up a two-dollar bettor's wager on a small-price favorite with that of a hundred dollar bet on a high-odds longshot that came in, John D flipped.

The two-dollar bettor was not only happy with his unexpected good fortune but used it to finance a trip to parts unknown before John D got wise.

Maggie's lapse of memory cost John D a mint. When he came

down off the walls, he flew at her in a rage.

Maggie, recently returned from a visit to Hank's apartment, remained serene throughout. When John D ran out of invective, she said, "I'm sorry, John D. I'll try to do better."

"You'll try to . . ." He squinted at her in sudden awareness, as though he hadn't really looked closely at her in some time.

For the next few days John D didn't once raise his voice to Maggie, not even when she made another costly mistake. Maggie noticed his abrupt change of attitude, of course, but she didn't give it a second thought.

One afternoon, over a week later, Maggie let herself into Hank's apartment with the key he'd given her and found him gone. It was the first time that had ever happened. Thinking he had probably stepped out on an errand and would be right back, she sat down to wait.

Three hours later she was still waiting and nearly out of her mind. She knew of no one to call. Hank had never told her of any friends or relatives. Finally, at a quarter to six, she left the apartment and took a cab back to the hotel. It was after six, long past the beginning of Hank's shift, when she walked into the cocktail lounge.

Hank wasn't there. A strange bartender was behind the bar.

Maggie asked, "Where's Hank?" The bartender looked blank.

"Hank? Oh, you mean the regular guy." He shrugged. "Search me. The union sent me over to fill in."

"He didn't call in or anything?"

"Not the way it was handed to me. The boss here's fit to be tied."

"But Hank doesn't do things that way!"

"It happens to the best of us now and again, lady."

Behind Maggie, John D. said, "Have a good time shopping today, babe?"

Maggie whirled, her breath catching. How much had he heard? His face was bland, the dark eyes as unreadable as always. He swayed a little on his feet, and his breath was strong with whiskey.

Maggie managed, "I didn't go shopping today, John D. I took in a movie."

"Saving me money, huh? Good girl!" He chuckled. "I took off early tonight. Thought we might make a night of it. Dinner, dancing, the whole bit. You've been working too hard lately, and I guess I've been a little rough on you, expecting too much."

The last thing in Maggie's mind was dinner and dancing. She wanted to search for Hank Fairchild; naturally she couldn't tell John D. that. And where would she look?

She went along, a numbing cold spreading through her.

They went to the same restaurant where John D. had taken her that first night. John D. was unusually chatty. Maggie, her brain a

squirrel cage, didn't hear a word he said.

They were on their second drink when a tall, thin, middle-aged man, with cold blue eyes and wearing a gray suit, slipped into the booth.

John D. stiffened, face emptying of its recent animation.

The intruder said, "Hello, John. It's been awhile."

A part of Maggie's attention was captured. It was the first time she'd heard anyone call John D. plain John.

John D. said, "Sergeant— Do you know Maggie Ward?"

"We haven't met, but I've heard of Miss Ward." The man in gray politely inclined his head.

"This is Sergeant Barlow, Maggie, of the LAPD homicide."

The word rang a warning bell far back in Maggie's mind, but she was still too concerned about Henry Fairchild to react immediately.

"John," Sergeant Barlow said, "you know the Loser?"

John D. chuckled. "In my business, sergeant, I know a lot of losers. Otherwise I wouldn't be in business long."

"The Loser is a syndicate man. Have gun, will travel. When a syndicate member wants somebody eliminated, the Loser's sent in. He's a specialist at losing people. Hence, the name."

"Losing people? The syndicate?" John D. said blandly. "Now you've lost me, Sergeant."

"The Loser's been in town for a

couple of days. We didn't find out until too late. He jetted out this afternoon. We have a pickup out on him now. We suspect he had a contract. You see, he slipped up a little this time. Usually his victims aren't found for days, weeks, months. But we found this one about the time the Loser was leaving town, found him draped around a tree halfway down a mountain up Laurel Canyon. The victim—" Sergeant Barlow transferred his gaze to Maggie. "One Henry Fairchild, throat sliced from ear to ear. The way I get it, the Loser's good with a knife."

Maggie could have sworn she screamed aloud. Apparently she had not, for nothing changed in Sergeant Barlow's narrow face.

John D said, "I don't know any Henry Fairchild."

"He was the bartender at the lounge in your hotel."

John D shrugged. "So? I've been there a few times for a belt. That doesn't mean I know the barkeep's name. And even if I did, I still don't see the connection."

"Since identifying the victim, we've poked around, asking questions. It seems others have been poking around as well, asking questions of Fairchild's neighbors this past week. Questions about a woman visiting Fairchild in his apartment."

"I still don't see what that has to do with me!"

"It has this to do with you," Ser-



geant Barlow said softly. "If we can tie the Loser in with this, I have a hunch it'll lead right back to you. The department has been after you for a long time, John. So far you've always managed to squirm out from under. This time I think we'll nail you."

John D's laughter grated. "That'll be the day, cop!"

"That will indeed be the day." Sergeant Barlow stood up, then leaned on the table on his knuckles. "I suppose you're wondering why I'm telling you all this? I'm hoping you'll run like the rat you are. That'll be all I need for an excuse to pull you in!"

As Sergeant Barlow moved away, John D muttered, "Dumb cop! If he thinks he can spook me into running!"

Without looking at him Maggie said, "You had Hank killed. You found out about Hank and had him killed because I was in love with him!"

"In love!" John D snorted. "You think I care about that? Flip for a

dozen guys, you dumb broad, and see if I care. But he had that memory of yours on the blink, had you going around in a fog half the time. It was costing me dough!" He scooped his drink off the table, drained it in a gulp and slammed the glass down. "Let's get out of here! I've lost my appetite!"

He got out of the booth and started off, weaving slightly. From force of habit Maggie followed him, her gaze clinging to his back.

Outside, John D stood on the curb, looking both ways for a cab. LaCienga was thick with traffic. The restaurant was located on a corner, the street branching off LaCienga at an angle a quiet, residential one. Now John D spotted a cab, cruising lights burning, but it was in the center lane of three lanes of forty-mile-an-hour traffic.

John D waved both arms, shouting, "Hey! Cab! Over here!"

In his anxiety John D stepped off the curb and out into the street.

Maggie heard squealing tires and instinctively glanced to her left. An old car was lurching around the corner at high speed. The driver had ignored the stop sign and was trying to turn the car onto LaCienga, desperately fighting the wheel for control. Maggie's gaze whipped back.

John D was directly in the path of the careening car, his back to it, still waving his arms at the cab which was already a half block up the street.

Maggie opened her mouth to shout a warning, then closed it without so much as a whisper escaping her.

The right front fender of the car caught John D in the small of the back, doubling him over the hood as though on a torture rack and carrying him a few feet up the street before tossing him high and to one side.

His scream was as shrill as a woman's. It seemed to take forever for him to fall to the pavement. Even from where she stood Maggie clearly heard the thudding sound his head made when it struck the curb.

The car weaved on for about a hundred feet before coming to a stop under the spill of light from a street lamp. Maggie saw everything clearly, even the rusty gouges on the bumper just above the license plate. And she saw the white blur of the driver's face as he looked back. Then the car spurted away, turned the next corner and disappeared.

Maggie walked slowly over to where John D lay and stood looking down at him. A crowd was already gathering. It seemed only seconds before Maggie heard a siren wail. Then two uniformed officers were there, one kneeling beside John D, the other pushing the crowd back.

Dimly Maggie heard voices.

"He's still alive but barely. He'll never make it."

"Anybody get the license number?"

"I saw the car, officer, but I wasn't close enough to . . ."

"This lady, officer. She was with him, and she saw the whole thing."

Maggie blinked, trying to focus her gaze, as she realized she was being spoken to. "Yes, officer?"

"Did you see the car that hit him, miss?"

"The car? Oh, yes, I saw the car."

"Did you get the license number?"

"The license number?" Maggie looked again at John D. Was he still conscious enough to hear her? She hoped so.

Absently she snapped her fingers, shook her head.

"I'm sorry, officer. I must have seen the license number, but I can't remember it. I guess I just don't have a memory for things like that."

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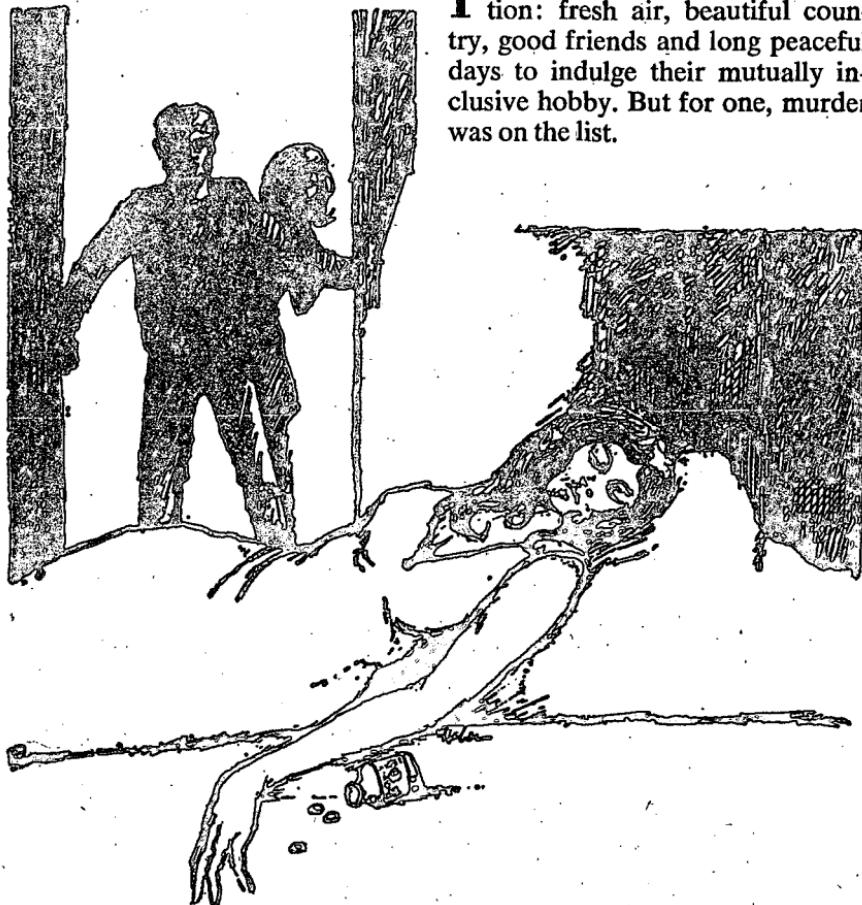
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The Ensemble Players

*Somewhere upstairs a frightened lady
was lying down for her last long sleep. Downstairs
a killer was humming her funeral song . . .*

by ESTELLE CHESSID

IT HAD SEEMED the perfect vacation: fresh air, beautiful country, good friends and long peaceful days to indulge their mutually inclusive hobby. But for one, murder was on the list.



They were two couples admirably suited to each other, or so they liked to brag. Mr. Eric Carter, tall, dark and serious; Mrs. Marcia Carter, petite, bubbly and pretty. Mr. George Gaines, slender, handsome and volatile; Mrs. Alice Gaines, tall, buxom and passive. They made a striking quartet—as indeed they were.

At a concert, some nine months before, they had met and struck up a casual intermission conversation. Chatting agreeably, they discovered that each was an ardent and accomplished musician as well as a devoted and experienced chamber player. They also discovered, to their vaulting delight, that together they completed the classic string quartet instrumentation.

Mr. and Mrs. Carter played viola and cello respectively and Mr. and Mrs. Gaines first and second violin. Their enthusiasm was boundless and their friendship was launched.

For the next nine months the four met regularly once a week to play through the string quartet repertoire. By late spring both husbands had agreed to take off the whole month of August and both wives had looked for and found a suitable house near a lake which they could lease jointly.

It was a lovely old house, right on the waterfront, with spacious airy rooms and thick walls. Best of all, it was two full miles from its nearest neighbor. Here they

could stay, swim, relax and play music to their hearts' content. All four could hardly wait for August to arrive.

One especially found the waiting almost unbearable.

George Gaines, *Violino I*, had decided it was time to do something about his wife Alice. He had been toying with the welcome idea of her demise for some time before he had met the Carters. Now, with their ripening acquaintance—especially acquaintance with Marcia Carter—George had been thinking of it more and more frequently. True, Alice Gaines was buxom (though George felt pendulous was a more accurate description), tall (hulking!) and passive (dull).

She was also prissy, compulsively neat and tiring. Her steady, colorless personality was a comfort in a quartet, but she bored George to humiliated impatience in every other respect.

Marcia Carter was something else again. Fine-boned, slight and graceful, she had fire and wit, charm and humor. And she seemed to respond instinctively to George. With his own wife out of the way, George could play the bereft widower in need of consideration and tender affection with uninhibited pleasure. He felt sure he could win Mrs. Carter for his life's partner without too much trouble. In this beguiling daydream, Eric Carter played no role whatever.

August at the beach proved hot,

pleasant and relaxing. The four played, read, chatted and made love—in their proper places and with their legal spouses, much to Mr. Gaines' regrets. Everything in their cooperative venture went smoothly, thanks to the organizational gifts of Alice Gaines.

At the start, timidly and with much apology, she had suggested they divide the rooms equally into bedrooms, sitting rooms and practice rooms, with a common eating room and lounge. The chores she apportioned equally well, rotating tasks and allotting maximum time for individual activity.

In that way, privacy and cooperation could be served amably. Alice's quiet passion for equality and fairness even led her to assigning the honor of choosing the evening's quartets on a rotating basis and she felt particularly proud when it had worked out to an equal number of times for each person.

Marcia and Eric were content to leave all the nuisance of organizing and arranging to Alice and were happy to encourage her initiative. George felt Alice's "organizational gifts" to be just another exasperating manifestation of her unimaginative and severely limited intelligence.

He went along with the plans however, and routine was soon established.

For three weeks everything worked smoothly and in harmony. By the beginning of the fourth

week George felt it was time to activate his plans and realize his day-dreams. He had had it with Alice.

Stretched out on the couch of their sitting room that humid sticky night, George spoke to Alice quietly and with deep concern.

"Alice, darling, you're not looking too well lately, and you're acting rather oddly. Is something the matter?"

"Oh? I hadn't noticed anything different. I feel fine. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I don't like to mention it, but your playing is getting a little sloppy. Maybe you're tired. Aren't you sleeping well?"

"Oh, my." Alice's long face grew troubled and she brushed her hand absently over her eyebrows, pulling at the corner hairs—a habitual gesture George abhorred. "Oh, dear. I am sorry, darling. I hope the others haven't noticed."

"No. Not yet I don't think. But I suggest you get a few nights of good rest. Why don't you take some of those pills you use to sleep when we're at home? I noticed you packed them."

"Yes I did. I always take precautionary measures. I didn't think you noticed." She perked up a bit, complimented that he had for once noticed her uncritically. "You never know when someone might need something."

Eager to hold his attention, she continued hurriedly, "I brought sleeping pills, aspirin, band-aids,

laxatives—the change in climate you know—”

George interrupted her. “I know dear. You always think of those problems. Why don’t you take something tonight? It’s pretty late already and you don’t look very sleepy. This heat might make you restless.” He got up abruptly. “Here. I’ll get them for you.”

“Well dear, if you think so—” Her thin voice trailed after him, filling the already oppressive air with that plaintive tone he found maddening.

In the past her cloying acquiescence had always affected him adversely but lately it was pushing him more and more into the solid comfort of his private fantasies. Marcia Carter had given flesh and personality to the main figure within these fantasies.

Rummaging in the closely packed medicine cabinet, George’s thoughts churned angrily. He hated Alice for her unquestioning agreement and deep dependence on him. She never argued or disputed, invariably taking his cue and following wherever and to whatever it led. That abject, helpless adoration stifled him and smothered him like a sickening fog.

In striking contrast, he felt exhilarated and excited by Marcia Carter’s constant challenging merrily and teasing banter socially. She was like a tangy, cool breath of air.

George’s day dream now began

in full swing: he had to have her as his, no matter what the cost. She made him feel alive, vigorous, manly; and when she occasionally agreed to do as he said without argument, he felt flattered and triumphant.

When she would taunt him with a particularly witty jibe and he responded in kind, she would burst into disarming incandescent laughter, fully acknowledging his superiority, only to challenge and question it again in the next sentence. He was mad for her and the proximity of her presence coupled with the complete propriety of her behavior drove him wild.

The clatter of broken glass brought him back to his task. He had dropped one of those damned bottles and Alice’s sweet, calm voice assailed him again.

“No,” he answered her unheard words, “It’s all right. I’m just picking it up. I’ve got your pills. I’m coming out now.”

As he crossed the small hall a pleasant thought struck him, bringing a smile to his lips. “For once that damned *implicit trust in you, George* phrase would be useful.

At breakfast the next morning only George Gaines appeared. Eric Carter was the one who voiced the question.

“Where’s Alice, George? She still asleep?”

“I guess so. Last night was such a dog. She said she didn’t feel well, so she took some of her pills. Sleep-

ing pills, I think. I slept on the couch in the sitting room not to disturb her. She always sleeps late when she takes her pills. I wish she wouldn't do it quite so often. I've spoken to her about it many times but she says she hates lying awake all night more than anything. She'd rather take what she calls the lesser of the two evils."

Marcia Carter looked up, startled. "Sleeping pills? I'm not sure it is the lesser of two evils. I didn't know Alice had trouble sleeping. She certainly doesn't act like she needs any pills to sleep. She's the most serene, disciplined person I've ever met."

Marcia bit her lip thoughtfully for a second. "Maybe that's why she's so great to play chamber music with: solid as a rock, never overbearing, never loud or demanding." Suddenly her pert, freckled face broke into a gently teasing grin and she added, "You're sure lucky, George."

George, as usual, wasn't sure she was serious or slyly taunting him again.

He answered as blandly as he could, "Yes, I know. Well, let's eat. I want to look over some music for tomorrow's playing."

They finished breakfast and went their separate ways, completing their assigned chores efficiently and quickly to get on with their daily practicing for the evening's playing. This was the routine.

At noon they would meet once

again for lunch, clean up and return to what they had been doing or make fresh arrangements for the afternoon. At six they ate the evening meal, got out their instruments and played quartets for several hours. In this regimented way they all felt happiest and most productive. All except George.

At this point in his life he had other ideas about what he wanted



to do with his evenings and it was not to play music. It was not yet the time for those activities but it would be coming soon.

At noon, when they all met for lunch, Alice's continued absence turned ominous.

"George, you better check on Alice. Haven't you been back to the room all morning?" Marcia's voice was tense with alarm.

"No, I haven't been into the bedroom at all. I got interested in a tricky passage and worked on it all morning. I just happened to look at my watch a few minutes ago and realized the hour, so I came running straight to the dining room. I

just assumed Alice'd be here. Is it her day to prepare lunch?"

"No. Mine. That's why I only noticed it now. Please go. look, George. I'm scared. I haven't heard a sound from her all morning and I had the vacuum going loud enough to wake the dead a while ago. I barely heard you practicing down the hall. By the way, what was that you were practic—"

Marcia Carter clapped her hand to her mouth and her normally light blue eyes darkened with remembrance. She jumped up, knocking her chair backwards, and ran towards the stairs. George sprinted ahead to race up the steps first. He flung open the door to his bedroom and stopped short. Holding both hands on the door frame he tried to block the view with his body.

Marcia, right behind him stood on her toes and peered over his shoulder into the room. She gasped, "My God, it's too late," and swayed backwards.

Eric, just reaching the landing, lunged forward and caught her before she could fall. They both staggered into the doorway, pushing George ahead of them in their rush.

Alice lay on the rumpled sheets and blankets, very pale, seemingly asleep. They all sensed she was dead. George, of course, knew. Her body lay silent and heavy, spread crossways on the bed with one arm and shoulder dangling loosely over the side. Marcia's face blanched

suddenly and she averted her head.

George, kneeling at the bedside, touched Alice's hand and cried out, "Dear Lord, she's ice cold!"

He lowered his head to his shaking hands and moaned incoherently. Eric rushed over to him and called to Marcia thickly, holding back his own nausea between clenched teeth.

"Get downstairs. Call the police—a doctor—Hurry!" Eric shouted.

Marcia shuddered and turned to stumble down the stairs.

Five minutes later Eric came down the steps, half supporting George. George was panting slightly but quiet. Eric motioned Marcia to keep still. She sat on the chair near a little table, one hand still on the telephone receiver she had just put down, the other clutching the arm of the chair. Her eyes stared blankly at George.

Eric's voice cut into her impending hysteria like a scalpel releasing the tension. A tremor shook her entire body and with sagging shoulders, she slumped back into the pillow.

"Marcia! Did you call yet? Are they on their way?" Eric's voice was more controlled now but his face still bore the pallor of the recent shock.

"Yes. The police will be here very soon. I told them I thought she was dead." Marcia turned back to face George. "Why, George? Why? What happened last night?"

Something in Marcia's normally

light clear voice made George look up sharply. His brown eyes were totally unreadable. He moved his mouth but no sound came.

Eric cut in harshly, "Marcia! Leave him alone. Wait for the police. Just be quiet now!"

"No, Eric. I want him to answer. Why, George? Why did you kill her?"

Eric's head spun around. "Marcia! What the devil are you saying? What's wrong with you! Are you mad?!"

"No, Eric. George knew Alice was dead all along. I know that now. I just don't know why he killed her. Why George. Why?"

George looked at Marcia quietly for a second, smiled sadly and shook his head. "Why do you say a thing like that, Marcia? Why now of all times? I did not know any such thing. What makes you think I knew she was dead at all, much less—" George seemed to choke on the next words, barely whispering them—"kill her?"

Marcia was unmoved. She went on slowly, clearly and bitterly.

"Because, George, I remembered something at lunch that had been bothering me all morning. And when Alice didn't come down and you seemed so unconcerned and unworried, I realized you must have known something. I realized you must be lying."

George tried to say something but Marcia went on fiercely, stopping him with the onrushing inten-

sity of her words. "You see, George, I remembered that while I was cleaning upstairs I heard you practicing but I couldn't place the passage at first. Now that annoyed me because I knew I had played it myself. I just couldn't place it."

Eric said hoarsely, thickly, "Marcia! What the devil's wrong with you? Good God, woman. Can't you see what you're implying?"

Marcia Carter glanced at her husband mildly, fatigue and shock making her face a mask of itself. She answered him mildly, gently, "Wait a minute, Eric. I'm not finished. It's a very important point."

Turning back to George Gaines, sitting motionless on the couch staring at her with quasi-amused indulgence, Marcia's mouth set tightly. Her voice took on a hard metallic sheen as she continued:

"You know, George, that we play only quartets. Eric and I didn't even bring any other music up here except quartets and some solo finger studies. You didn't bring anything else either. Alice told me that definitely. She also told me that you and she never play chamber music without one another. Always, without exception, together. She was very proud of that, you—"

Marcia almost broke down, but by an obvious effort of will and hatred, she went on, "At lunch, when I tried to reconstruct my morning, that nagging melody finally fell into its place. You recall I jumped up so hard my chair fell

over? You do recall, George, because you saw me remember. You saw and you got up so fast you nearly knocked me down tearing up the steps. To block the doorway? Was that it, George?"

Eric Carter stared in dawning comprehension and George stiffened into his pose on the couch, feeling his lips freeze.

Marcia continued, this time more softly, through gritted teeth, "That

piece that Eric feels is so stupid. That's your funeral march, isn't it George? Because it wasn't a quartet you were playing was it. No, dear partner and friend. It was a Beethoven Trio." She turned to Eric to add drily, "A Beethoven Trio. Get it, darling? No second violin."

The police car siren cut short anything Eric Carter, or George Gaines, were about to say.

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Every man has his price, he knew. And the price he asked for was plenty—plus a man's life. Just how big? Well . . .

the
PRICE

by

CARROLL

MAYERS

MILES FERKO, Chief of Guards, was in cellblock B that morning when he got word Jay Larkin was waiting to see the warden. A stocky man with calculating gray



eyes, Ferko frowned at the trusty who had brought the information.

"He say what he wanted?"

The prisoner shook his head. "No."

Ferko's frown built; he got only grudging obeisance from the majority of these cons, but he assuredly was going to receive token respect, particularly in his present position.

"No, sir!" he rapped.

The trusty's stolid expression held, but he did capitulate. "No, sir," he echoed.

Ferko accepted the compliance with satisfaction. "Tell him I'll be there in fifteen minutes," he said.

In point of fact, Ferko had not anticipated Larkin's visit, but now that the syndicate lawyer was here, Ferko was not surprised. Actually, with Len Glass in prison only two days and still being processed with physical and psychological tests, Larkin's appearance was to be expected.

Glass had been a top-flight director of legitimate business infiltration by the syndicate, with aspirations of climbing to even higher echelons. Finally tripped up by the Government for tax evasion, Glass had threatened damning disclosures when his erstwhile organization had not rallied to his defense.

Under such circumstances, Jay Larkin's visit well might have been looked for, whatever its true motivation.

Ferko did not hold to the quarter-hour he had cited, deliberately kept the syndicate lawyer waiting a full thirty minutes. Larkin, though, exhibited no annoyance at the delay when Ferko finally entered the office.

"Good morning, Warden," Larkin said expansively, extending his hand. "It's good of you to spare me the time."

Ferko shook hands briefly, narrowed gaze appraising his visitor. Jay Larkin was lean, expensively suited, with a pair of chill blue eyes behind thick lenses. Over all, the lawyer exuded a subtle aura of shrewd, utter competency.

"Acting warden," Ferko corrected. "I'm Miles Ferko, Chief of Guards, taking over in Warden Howell's absence."

"I see. A little vacation for him?"

Larkin's query, pleasant and innocuous, did not dispel Ferko's sudden hunch the lawyer already was fully aware of the situation. He did not immediately challenge the issue, however, said merely, "No, the warden's attending a convention of penal authorities. He's expected back this afternoon."

Larkin continued the amenities. "A conscientious man, I understand."

Ferko was suddenly irritated. He was top-dog at the moment; no wily syndicate shyster was going to cat-and-mouse him.

"I believe you're not entirely un-

familiar with the circumstances," he said.

Larkin was not perturbed by the shaft. "Perhaps not," he answered evenly.

"So?"

"So I considered it an opportune time to discuss Len Glass," the lawyer said.

Ferko's irritation burgeoned. "What about Glass?"

The lawyer took a moment to fire a cigarette. "As a former member of our—ah—organization," he said smoothly, "we're extremely concerned that Glass be taken care of here."

Ferko regarded Larkin closely, a tiny tocsin echoing at the back of his mind. He said, "Maybe you'd better be more explicit."

"Of course," Larkin nodded. "It's common knowledge that accidents inadvertently occur in prison. An inmate is confined to solitary in a damp and unheated cell and contacts pneumonia; he has a weak heart and is unwittingly overworked; or bad blood develops between him and another inmate and he's stabbed in the exercise yard or mess hall."

The lawyer paused momentarily. "Unfortunately, such an occurrence is sometimes fatal."

Ferko's tocsin was louder now. "Something like that can happen, yes," he acknowledged flatly.

"Precisely," the syndicate lawyer said. "That's what I meant. We're very anxious that Len Glass

be given special attention following his initial processing."

Ferko's gaze was tight. "Just in case you've overlooked it," he said, "after Warden Howell I'm responsible for the attention of all the cons in here. That's what I'm paid for."

"Certainly." Larkin smiled quickly. "But not, I venture to say, to a fully satisfactory degree."

Any doubts Ferko still may have held regarding the motivation behind the syndicate lawyer's visit were now gone. "And if I'm not satisfied, you have a suggestion?"

Larkin studied the tip of his cigarette. "You said that, I didn't."

"You implied it."

"I did?" Larkin's parry was deft. "I considered it merely an observation, myself." He regarded Ferko steadily, added, "And speaking of observation, I might also suggest every man has his price."

Color began to suffuse Ferko's features. He whispered, "Get out of here!"

The lawyer made no immediate move to depart. Instead, he withdrew an unsealed envelope from his pocket, casually opened the flap to permit Ferko to glimpse the thick sheaf of currency inside, then re-pocketed the envelope.

"Every man, Ferko," he stressed.

Ferko's forehead was slick now; he tongued stiff lips, repeated, "Get out of here!"

This time, Larkin nodded calm-

ly. Turning from Ferko's desk, he slid a card across the polished surface. "You can reach me at that number should the occasion arise." Then, with another brief smile, the syndicate lawyer left the office.

Following Larkin's departure, Ferko was free to resume his duties, but he did not immediately do so. Rather, for the next quarter hour he continued to sit at his desk, his gaze bleak as he regarded the lawyer's card, somberly recalled the subtle nuances of the man's remarks.

It was as though an insidious seed had suddenly been planted in richly fertile soil. Did every man have his price? If so, what was his? Twenty-five thousand? Fifty thousand?

The minutes ticked away as Miles Ferko, Acting Warden, gave sober consideration to the cunning speculation.

AT FIFTY-ONE and a widower, Arthur Howell was indeed a conscientious, dedicated official whose principal fault, if in truth it might be so judged, lay in hard-headed confidence in his own ability. Prematurely gray, with an habitually wary expression molded by the very nature of his job, Howell applied himself unstintingly to the task at hand, was catching up on some reports when Miles Ferko came into his office late that afternoon. The two had not met since the warden's return to the prison.

"Hello, Miles." Howell's nod was courteous. "Anything special on your mind?"

"Yes, sir," Ferko said. "Something I think you should know."

The warden put aside the report he'd been studying. "Oh?"

"It concerns Jay Larkin."

Howell's brows arced. "The syndicate lawyer?"



"Yes, sir."

"What about him?"

Briefly, Ferko recounted Larkin's visit.

"Len Glass was getting too big ideas, trying to climb too fast," he finished. "That's why the syndicate ditched him. But now that he's threatening to blow the whistle on their operations, they're worried. They want him silenced—in here."

Ferko paused for emphasis. "Jay Larkin's whole bit was a shrewd reverse pitch he knew I'd recognize. Under the guise of anxiety for special consideration for Glass, Larkin actually propositioned me, suggested means for a fatal accident I might rig."

Howell's jawline set. "Outrageous! I'll report the man to the Bar Association—"

"You can't, sir," Ferko demurred. "Everything Larkin said was carefully couched. The money was only incidentally exhibited, not proffered. Under oath, I'd have to admit all that. If you try to expose Larkin, at the very least he'll slap you with a slander suit."

The warden bristled. "You're saying there's nothing we can do?"

"No, I'm not," Ferko said. "We—primarily me, Warden—I can take strict precautionary measures with Glass to insure nothing of the nature Larkin intimated happens. And perhaps you could submit an off-the-record memorandum to the governor—"

Howell cut Ferko short. "I don't need any advice or help from the governor. I can handle this situation."

"Yes, sir," Ferko said. "I'll set up and supervise a rigid routine for Glass as soon as he's fully processed."

The warden indicated the folder at his elbow.

"He's finished," he informed Ferko. "On the basis of his literacy and IQ tests and Borowski's imminent release, I'm assigning Glass to the library."

Howell sat back in his chair, shot his chief of guards a tight look. "I want those precautionary measures one hundred percent, Miles."

Ferko's assurance was prompt. "You can depend on it, Warden."

On leaving the office, Ferko derived taut satisfaction from the

way in which the trusty on duty immediately moved to open the outer door for him.

As with the trusty that morning, these cons had better shape up for Miles Ferko.

That night, in his bachelor apartment across town, Ferko found sleep difficult. Finally, at two he got up and shucked into robe and slippers, fixed himself a gin and tonic.

Seated in the darkened living room, staring out at the deserted street and slowly sipping his drink, Ferko's thoughts still traversed the calculating channel they had never fully departed since that morning, when Jay Larkin had posed the question of a man's true price.

Before dawn began to finger the sky and he went back to bed for a final hour, doubt and irresolution were laid to rest. In his own case, Ferko knew.

THE FATAL stabbing in the prison library of Len Glass, ex-Syndicate organizer, was front page news across the state when the story broke three days later. The inmate who had killed Glass was unknown, as was the motive for the stabbing, but Warden Arthur Howell, working closely with his chief of guards, Miles Ferko, had pledged Governor Petrie an exhaustive investigation.

That evening, the public was apprised of still another development. Watching a TV newscast in his

apartment, Ferko listened attentively as the announcer stated:

"... and in the prison case of racketeer Len Glass' fatal knifing, a bizarre angle came to light this afternoon when it was learned that an anonymous tipster had phoned Governor Petrie charging that Warden Howell had been previously informed of the likelihood of an attempt on Glass' life but had summarily rejected relaying such information to the governor.

"Your reporter can state this is not the first time Howell has elected to act independently, but in the present instance, pending a complete investigation of the charge, the governor's office has announced that Warden Howell has been relieved of all duties and Chief of Guards Miles Ferko has been named acting warden indefinitely."

Ferko clicked off the TV but continued to regard the blank screen impassively. Several minutes later, the phone rang; answering, Ferko recognized the strained voice of Arthur Howell.

"I'd like to see you, Miles. At my home."

The evident agitation in Howell's tone brought a twitch to Ferko's lips. "Now, sir?"

"If it's convenient."

"Yes, sir. I'll come over right away."

A sardonic glint flickered in Ferko's eyes as he hung up. He did not, however, immediately leave his apartment. Rather, he with-

drew from his pocket the card Jay Larkin had left the morning of his visit to the prison, studied it pensively. Then he dialed the number listed.

There was no certainty the syndicate lawyer would be available at this hour, but after a moment his suave voice answered. Ferko identified himself, said simply, "As you've gathered from the news, that 'occasion' you referred to has arisen."

The line hummed briefly; then Larkin said, "Yes?"

"Yes," Ferko said, a slight edge creeping into the word. "I want to see you—tonight."

Again there was a momentary pause, after which the syndicate lawyer answered, "Very well. Where?"

"Here, at my apartment," Ferko told him. "Howell has just called me from his home, wants to see me. I'm driving there now. But I'll be back here in an hour."

"Very well," Larkin repeated, and broke the connection.

Warden Howell's home, a modest frame structure, was adjacent the prison, outside the walls. Frequently, trustees served in various attendant capacities; tonight, Howell answered the door himself, ushered Ferko into the living room.

Completely at ease, Ferko settled on a divan, made no move to start the conversation.

Howell studied his chief of guards in silence for a long mo-

ment, then said quietly, "Pretty cocky, aren't you?"

Ferko hiked one brow. "Sir?" There was no respect in the word now, nor wonderment, only thinly-veiled sarcasm.

The warden's look remained steady. "Don't fence with me, mister," he said softly. "I've seen you with the men and I've been doing some hard thinking about this whole affair. Now I believe I know."

Howell paused significantly, added, "Now we both know."

Ferko was pleased to continue his mocking mien. "Sir?" he echoed.

Howell ignored the second barb. "Your price," he countered flatly, "the price Jay Larkin threw at you. You may take syndicate cash as a bonus, Ferko, but it isn't money you really want. What you really want is authority, the right to command—power. That's why you made that anonymous tip to try and destroy me."

Ferko didn't blink under the warden's accusation. "You're sure?" he queried easily.

Howell's rejoinder was tense. "I'm sure," he said. "I'm also sure you yourself killed Len Glass to spark your ploy to take over my job."

Ferko manufactured a thin smile. "You'll never prove that, Howell."

"I can try."

Ferko stood up, open contempt

in his eyes. "You do and I'll crucify you." The humorless smile held. "Just between us, you're finished."

"Perhaps. But not before I phone the governor myself."

"He'll never listen to you."

The warden's chin set. "He'll listen," he said grimly.

Ferko's contempt swelled. Why was he bothering to trade words with the man? "Sure he will," he mocked Howell. "But I won't hold my breath."

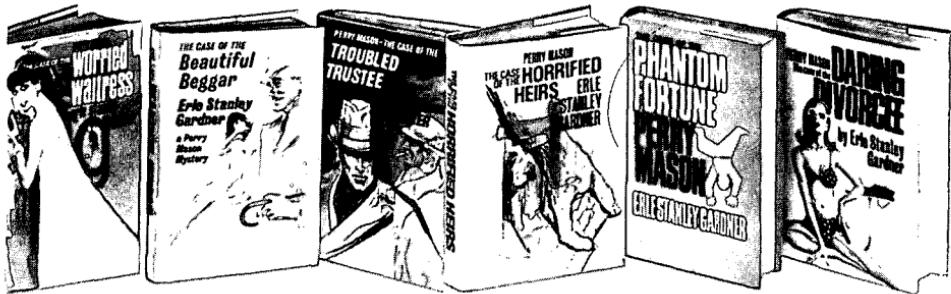
Abruptly determining to end the confrontation, salt the wound of Howell's impotence, he turned, strode from the room.

Perverse satisfaction rippled through Ferko as he returned to his car. So Howell knew? All right—let him. He could prove nothing of his accusation. Howell was *Out*. And Miles Ferko, Chief of Guards, was *In*. Grinning tightly, Ferko settled behind the wheel, switched on the ignition.

The explosion roared into the stillness of the night, left the car a twisted, flaming wreck of tortured metal, shattered glass. In the pulse beat before eternity, Miles Ferko may have realized he had been shrewdly appraised and used; that the syndicate never had intended payment for his service; that in his final conversation with their spokesman he had set the wheels in motion for his own silencing and elimination.

And that his price, his true price, was the highest of all.

Continued from other side



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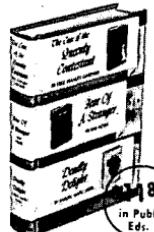


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